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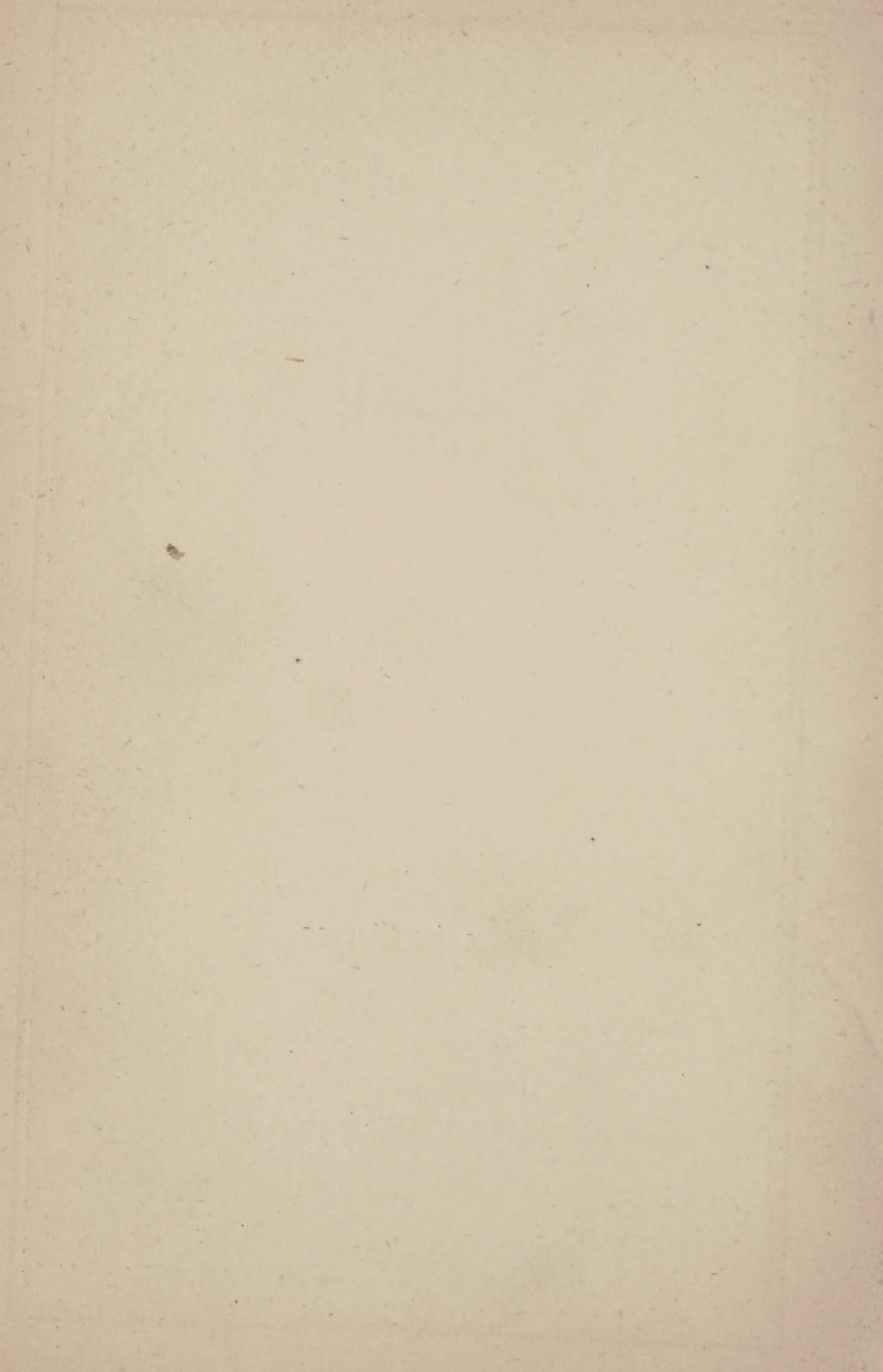
Three Bank Notes.



From the German.

PHILADELPHIA:
LUTHERAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

1875.



THE
THREE BANK-NOTES.

From the German of

FRANZ HOFFMANN.

BY

Miss R. ^{Shively} H. SHIVELY.

PHILADELPHIA:
LUTHERAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.
42 NORTH NINTH STREET.
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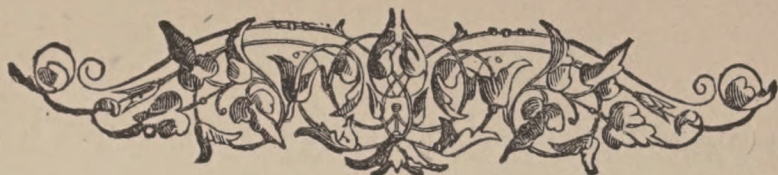
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THREE BANK-NOTES.

From the German of Franz Hoffmann.

CHAPTER I.

“Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?”—James ii. 5.

IT was just on the point of midnight, but the soft light of the full moon shone so brightly through the high bay-windows, with their large panes of plate-glass, that everything in the room might be clearly seen. Luxurious carpets, of costly fabric, covered the floor. On the walls hung splendid oil paintings, in gilded frames; broad mirrors rose from the floor to the high ceiling, and increased the light in the

room by reflecting the moon's rays from their polished surfaces. Sofas, arm-chairs, cushioned foot-stools, a magnificent grand piano, and various other articles of furniture, tasteful in their form, and richly ornamented, gave to the apartment a look at once imposing and comfortable. Its occupants had evidently just quitted it; the piano was open, and on the music-stand had been left a number of songs; quivering flames shot up now and then from among the dying embers on the hearth; chairs were standing in some confusion by the centre-table, and books lay upon it, as the readers had left them. The fine, aromatic fragrance of tea still lingered in the air; articles of daily use were strewn around; it was evident that, but a few minutes before, a cheerful family-life had pervaded the room, which now was empty and still. The lights were extinguished, and all had gone to rest. The voice of music was hushed, and in the deserted apartment reigned the deepest

silence, unbroken, save by the regular ticking of the gilded clock, whose pendulum swayed unceasingly, to and fro, aiding the noiseless motion of the hands.

And now the clock was about to strike; the wheels rattled, and a little hammer in the hand of a bronze armorer rose twelve times, and twelve times fell ringing upon a silver anvil; the sound echoed sweet and clear through the deep quiet of the room, vibrated more and more faintly and finally died away. It was midnight, all was again still.

And now commenced a soft, rustling whisper, as of lightly crumpled paper, a gentle, continuous sound. The moonlight fell brightly upon a little table near a window. Upon that table stood an exquisitely wrought golden casket, with a crystal lid; the moon's rays sparkled upon it, as on the surface of a mirror. From that casket arose the soft rustling; presently the lid flew open, as if impelled by some secret

power, and three little figures, looking like soft gray shadows, came forth and sat upon the delicate golden leaves and flowers of the arabesque that was artistically entwined around the casket. The three little figures bowed to one another, and exchanged greetings in tones so soft and low, that they sounded in the quiet room like the motion of leaves trembling in the breeze.

The moonlight was almost as bright as that of day. The silvery rays rested gently upon the little gray figures. Each wore a tiny mantle of printed paper, from which the small head with its delicate features looked forth; on close inspection it might have been perceived that each little mantle was a bank-note—a real paper note of the Bank of England, for just on the back of each little being stood distinctly printed, and easily read by the bright light, “Five Pound Note of the Bank of England.”

There they all sat, wrapped in their paper

mantles, upon the golden arabesques, chatting in whispers, and putting their heads close together. The moon shone upon them, as though she would have listened to their conversation. The clock ticked an accompaniment to it, and a spark crackled out once in a while from the dying fire on the hearth; and as all around is so quiet, let us draw a little nearer, and listen with the curious moon to what the tiny creatures are saying in that soft and gentle whisper.

And this is what the first is telling—

“Yes, my dear sisters, young as I am, I have seen and experienced a great deal, for we do not, like human beings, need years in which to grow and to acquire understanding; we came into the world full-grown, and men estimate us at once according to our full value, nor does our intelligence require long cultivation and many instructions to make it at home in the world. We are so lovable by nature, that men always

receive us with friendly smiles, and part from us with the greatest reluctance. They are so fond of us that they protect us carefully from everything rough and unpleasant; they shelter us from wind and storm, from cold and heat, from fire and water; in short, from all that might do us harm. They carry us about, near their hearts, or shut us up in chests guarded by triple locks and bars, that we may not be maltreated or stolen. They love us and care for us even more than their own children, and desire us so greatly, that no labor, no pains, no exertions are too great for them to use that they may have many of us in their possession. We belong, with them, to the human family. They allow us to have a share in all that befalls them, either of good or evil; and have no secrets from us, for they suppose that we are dumb and unable to betray them, so they take us with them to their most secret haunts, and allow us to hear every word they say to themselves or to one another.

Thus we see, hear, and observe many things which serve for our entertainment and instruction; and this protects us, who contribute, on our part, so much to the pleasure of mankind, from that weary monotony which must be so great an evil.

“Fortunately, I know but little of that evil through my own experience, but only through my observations of some human beings, in whose possession I have been. They were too weary for work, or even for enjoyment, of which they seemed to have had a surfeit, all its charms being gone; so they bore their lives like a burden, seeming to say nothing, except to repeat over and again—‘How weary, oh, how weary is the world!’ I pitied them with all my heart, for in spite of the thousands of our sisters that were in their possession, and who might have done so much for the welfare and happiness of other people, they knew no way of purchasing contentment for themselves, nor

of driving away the *ennui* over which they lamented so bitterly. These were generally wealthy people; and although I have known many, in small and lowly cottages, who envied the rich, I understood perfectly that such poor people had quite false ideas of the blessedness of riches, and were often in a more enviable condition than those who possessed them. What did they know of Ennui, that fearful spectre? Their time passed swiftly in active labor and work, over which they might enjoy such true and heartfelt pleasure as many rich people would gladly have exchanged hundreds of our sisters to feel if but for a few hours. Yes, those whom they thought more fortunate than themselves envied them their simple delights. How foolish men are! They do not prize what they have, and they overrate what they have not. One cannot help laughing at them, and yet they are much to be pitied, being so blind and silly, and so unthankful to

God. It is well that this is not true of all people. There are some, rich as well as poor, whom one cannot but love and respect, and these, too, I have known."

"Tell us about them, dear sister," whispered the second bank-note, as the first paused in thoughtful silence. "That will help to pass away our time, and to keep us from that monotony, which is so tiresome even to us. Relate to us your fortunes, and how you came here. Then I will tell *my* story, and our other sister must have her turn too. We, like yourself, have seen and heard much; and how can we better entertain one another than by exchanging our experiences and observations?"

"Indeed, our sister is right," said the third bank-note. "Do you begin and we will follow your example."

"Be it so," answered the first, settling herself into a more comfortable position. "Let us pass the quiet night in telling our stories, for

the days are so noisy, on account of the thronging and the business of the people around us, that one cannot hear her own voice. Listen to me, then, sisters, and I will tell you a story from my own life, one that has excited my sympathies and caused me to feel much pity and anxiety, but in the end very great joy.

“Let me pass rapidly over my birth and the various changes of my earlier years. I have no doubt that yours very much resembled mine. I found myself suddenly launched upon the world, in the midst of a great, great throng of sisters, whose number increased every minute. We were counted, tied together in bundles, and lay all of us quiet as mice, for we had as yet no experiences to impart, having seen nothing of life. We were laid in an iron chest, locked up with care, and carried away. When daylight shone again into my prison, I found myself in a spacious room, where a great many men were engaged in writing, casting up ac-

counts, counting, receiving and paying money. You understand—I was at a banker's, amid hundreds of thousands of bank-notes, and great heaps of round pieces of silver and gold, which looked down upon us with quite an air of superiority, although they were of no more real value than ourselves. I was still very ignorant, and understood but little of what was passing around me. But the quiet talk of our sisters at night, as they chatted with gay freedom, as soon as the noisy business of the day was over, gradually enlightened me. I soon felt myself as wise as any of the rest, and although I knew nothing of the world by my own experience, as many of the others did, I thought I should certainly soon find myself in the midst of it, especially as I early learned how well men loved us and how kindly and tenderly they treated us. I longed to leave my narrow corner for the wide world, and it

was at no distant day that my hopes and my curiosity were to be gratified.

“I was taken from the iron chest, and started on my wanderings. I went into royal castles, into cottages, into palaces, into citizens’ families, and everywhere I found much that was worthy of observation; but just where I expected to be most comfortable, there I was least at ease, that is, in the mansions of the rich and the great. And this, for a very simple reason. It is true, we are everywhere kindly received, but the warmth and cordiality to be met with in cottages and in plain citizens’ houses do not fall to our lot in those splendid dwellings. In palaces there are too many of us, so that we are handled with more indifference, and sent away without particular regret; but in cottages, we are always welcomed as rare and distinguished guests, and there I was loved and honored, I was admired, I was examined a hundred times a day, with delight;

and when at last the good people were obliged to part with me, it was not done without visible pain, and often not without hot tears. That was the reason why I preferred visiting lowly houses, and you, my sisters, whose lot is the same as mine, will understand the feeling.

“ Well, after various wanderings from one hand to another, and by the time I thought I had seen the whole world and learned all its ways, I came one day into such a place as I had never before known. It was a spacious room of a very repulsive and disagreeable appearance. Around the walls, and in cupboards, and on shelves, hung and lay the greatest variety of articles ; old and new garments, beds, furniture, vessels of gold and silver, clocks, watches, spoons, weapons, costly ware, boxes, kettles, ornaments, jewelry, in short, every imaginable article of any value, and on each hung a ticket with a number, which must, doubtless, have had some significance. The side of the room

on which was the entrance from without, was divided by wooden partitions into small cabinets, into which no one could see except from the interior of the room. Whoever should stand in one of these cabinets might indeed see the rest of the room, but could not see his neighbor to the right or to the left. I wondered at this strange arrangement, which I had never before seen ; and all the surroundings gave me a feeling of uneasiness, a kind of shuddering dread, which I was not able to overcome. A heavy, unpleasant odor poisoned the air of that strange place ; the many articles around, not a few of them dirty and mean-looking, disgusted me very much ; nor was the aspect of the possessor or guardian of these treasures at all calculated to reconcile me to my new place of abode.

“ He was a middle-aged man, with rigid and deeply-furrowed features ; eyes now cunning, now sparkling with an evil expression ; a

crooked figure, a sneaking, cat-like gait, and a mocking curl of the lips, which rendered him particularly repulsive to me. Early and late, he sat over his great books, crouching like a venomous toad, reckoning, counting, writing figures upon figures in long columns: or, he sat before his money boxes, in which great heaps of gold and silver glistened, and let the coins slip through his fingers with eager enjoyment, muttering to himself in his wretched pleasure over the wealth on which he gazed.

“There were a few young men with him, who, like himself, wrote and calculated in large books, but they were only his hired dependents. They seemed to me very insignificant beings, only a sort of machines, moved alone by the command of their master.


“For a whole day I wondered and tried to conjecture what this great room, with all its varied contents, might mean, but I could come to no conclusion about it, until at last, on the

following day, the riddle was solved for me. At nine o'clock in the morning, people began to come, stepping into one or another of the different cabinets, and displayed all sorts of things, on which my possessor set a price, and received them, giving in exchange greater or less sums of money, and also a ticket, which the bearer of the article received, and then went hastily away.

“There came Jews and Christians, women and young girls, men and boys, distinguished-looking spendthrifts, and poor day-laborers: people of all kinds and classes gave in their packages, received their money, and went away some cheerful, others distressed; some laughing, others downcast. The endless variety afforded me much entertainment, for I gradually learned to know the nature of the place to which I had come, and of the business carried on there. My new possessor was a pawnbroker, his house a loan-shop, where people might receive not more than half the value of

their goods at most, besides incurring the risk of being unable to redeem them, and being obliged to pay an exorbitant interest, which the pawnbroker deducted from the value set on the articles left with him. I had never before seen the inside of a pawnbroker's shop, but from the descriptions I had heard in earlier days from some of my sisters, all was soon clear to me, and then I took pleasure in seeing the many different things that were brought into the place, and in judging of the rank of the people who visited it by their dress, and of their characters by their countenances. In this manner the days passed rapidly away, until on the seventh, when no one came, and the outer doors were closed and locked. This seventh day was a Sunday, on which all business ceased; only the old pawnbroker hung over his gold and silver and bank-notes, counting them, and rubbing his hands with an inward chuckle, as he calculated the increase of his wealth.

“It was not long before I began to interest myself more in some particular persons, who appeared from time to time in the shop, than in the crowd that came and disappeared without making any special impression upon me. Foremost among these was a young woman, who soon enlisted my warmest sympathies. I was pleased with her appearance at first sight. Timid, and so thickly veiled that her features could scarcely be distinguished, she stepped into a cabinet and waited patiently until her turn came, and the pawnbroker deigned to bestow attention upon her. Her dress was poor, but with all its simplicity, was exceedingly neat, well-fitting, and cleanly. An old shawl enveloped her graceful and delicate figure, and when she gave her deposit to the old man, and received from him a small sum of money and her ticket, I noticed a small, snowy hand, which certainly was not accustomed to hard work. The hand trembled as it was again withdrawn



into the folds of her shawl, but I had no further opportunity for observation, for as patiently as the young girl had waited for those few shillings, so speedily did she take her leave when the business, certainly a most disagreeable one to her, was ended.

“Some days passed away, and I had almost forgotten the young girl, when suddenly she appeared a second time in the shop. I could not mistake her identity. There was the closely drawn veil of faded blue, whose thick folds concealed her face; the same gray bonnet, the old plaid shawl, the delicate little white hand, which received the money, trembling as it had done before. I tried my best to get a glimpse of her features under her veil, but could not succeed in satisfying my curiosity. She disappeared, and I felt the greatest desire to see her again, and become better acquainted with her.

“Poor child! she came indeed often, and

brought, now a ring, now a gold pin, now a pair of silver spoons, now one article of value, now another, which she exchanged for trifling sums; but never did she come bringing money to redeem the deposited articles. She was certainly very poor, and was obliged to struggle with bitter cares and depressing want. I felt the greatest compassion for her, and would gladly have tried to get into her possession, to accompany her home, had I not been fastened to my place by a strip of paper. I was far too weak to free myself, and besides, the old pawnbroker kept so watchful an eye upon us all, that I could not have slipped out without being observed. I had to lie still and wait patiently, and was very glad that I was not, like many other bank-notes, given out to people in whom I felt no interest. For much as I had at first wished myself out of this unattractive place, so much I now desired to remain there a little longer, and that solely for the sake

of this young girl, who occupied my thoughts so constantly, although I had scarcely, as yet, seen her figure, to say nothing of her face.

“At last, however, I was to behold both. One day, she came bringing a pair of silver spoons, which she offered to the stern old pawnbroker. Ah, I saw plainly that her hand trembled to-day more than ever before—certainly, I thought, these spoons must be almost the last thing she has. The old pawnbroker, in whose heart was as little compassion as there is juice in a dry, squeezed lemon, weighed the spoons in his knobbed and hairy hand, shook his head, and said, as usual, through his nose—

“‘Very light! very light! These have been a great deal used! I cannot give you more than six shillings, at most, for these.’

“The hard-hearted, old skin-flint! The spoons were worth three times as much, as I had by this time learned enough to judge, and

the avaricious wretch offered so little for them, because he was sure they would never be redeemed. The poor young girl seemed to penetrate his thoughts. I heard her, in a soft and silvery but rather trembling voice, insist on receiving nine shillings, declaring that she could not give up the spoons for a trifle. Her tone was so grieved, so gently beseeching—yet the heart of the old usurer was inaccessible to pity. All his soul was set upon gold, silver and bank-notes, nor did it trouble him that his miserable gains cost sighs and tears to the unfortunates. Obstinate he refused to give the little difference, until at last the young girl threw back her veil, displaying a countenance of such angelic beauty that even the hard usurer was touched. Indeed, her face was wonderfully lovely, but it was so pale that I was frightened; at that moment, my sympathy for her was doubled. Tears stood in her beautiful blue eyes, tears rolled down her white cheeks, tears

caused her voice to quiver, as with ill-repressed sobs, she exclaimed—

““ Oh, no, no, sir! I beg of you, give me nine shillings—*nine*! I need them. Indeed, I cannot take less!”

“ The sound of her voice, her imploring eyes, her clasped hands, aroused at last some feeling of humanity in the stony heart of the usurer. Muttering something that sounded like—

““ Well, well, for once!’—he took nine shillings from his money-box and counted them out to the young girl.

““ Thank you, sir!’ she said softly, as she gathered up the little sum. Then she hastily drew down her veil, and turned away, as usual, with a light and rapid step.

“ I could not help dwelling on the recollection of this young stranger. I saw continually before me her lovely pale features, her long, light-brown tresses, her gentle blue eyes, filled

with tears, and expressive of such heavy, heart-felt sorrow, such consuming grief, such bitter anxiety. I longed to have wings, like the little birds that sometimes fluttered past the window, that I might follow the unfortunate girl, and give myself to her, if so I might dry one tear, only one, from her cheek. She was so very young yet, certainly not more than sixteen years old, the poor child! and already her wasted features and eyes full of sadness told a tale of misfortune and suffering. What grief could thus have banished the roses of youth from her cheeks? This question occurred to me again and again, nor could I conjecture the solution of it; and, as I thought it over, my compassion arose to the highest pitch. With impatience, even with anxious restlessness, I awaited her next visit, and yet wished, with all my heart, that she might never be obliged to come back to that place. For, if she should not return, I might at least hope that her circum-

stances had improved, so that she need no longer sacrifice her little treasures to the usurer's avarice.

“Thus, amid divided wishes, I passed fourteen days. At last I had begun to think that my little friend had turned her back forever on the pawnbroker's shop, when one day she appeared again, dressed as usual in the well-known plaid shawl, the gray hat and faded blue veil. Yes, it was she, poor child, and although I was glad to see her, yet I was really pained, too. Her demeanor was that of suffering and dejection. As if weary of the burden of life, which rested so heavily on her young head, she leaned her slight figure against the partition of the cabinet, awaiting the old usurer's attention. At last he approached her with a kind of friendly grin—

“‘Well, here you are again, my pretty child,’ said he. ‘A long time since you came last! What pretty thing are you bringing now?’

“‘This!’ she replied, laying some glittering object on the table.

“I noticed here the old pawnbroker started, and pounced greedily upon the article. That led me to examine it more particularly. It was the gold frame of a medallion, set with sparkling jewels; the medallion was wanting, having evidently been taken out by the young lady.

“‘Ay, ay, there we have gold!’ said the old usurer, in his nasal tone; ‘and precious stones, too! I suppose I shall have to dip into my money-box deeper than usual to-day. How much do you want for this, young lady?’

“‘Fifteen pounds sterling, sir!’ replied the young girl, gently, but with decision. ‘Fifteen pounds, not a shilling less!’

“‘Fifteen pounds! why, my child, you are dreaming!’ replied the old knave; ‘who knows whether the setting is really gold: the stones are only imitations, at any rate.’

“ ‘Oh, no,’ replied the young girl; ‘I know these stones are genuine, for before I came here, I had it examined by a jeweler, and its value estimated. It is worth twenty pounds—I ask only fifteen for it.’

“The old usurer knew very well that the frame was really worth the amount she mentioned, but he wished to make the sum he wanted to give for it as little as possible, feeling quite certain it would never be redeemed.

“ ‘Ridiculous!’ he exclaimed, roughly and harshly. ‘I will give you six pounds, and that’s enough! Don’t be foolish, child.’

“ ‘Fifteen pounds—I will give it for no less,’ returned the girl firmly. ‘Do not try to cheapen it, sir. Give me the money, I am in haste.’

“ ‘Well, then—seven pounds.’

“ ‘Fifteen!’

“ ‘Eight!’

“ ‘Fifteen!’

“‘Ten then—not a shilling more!’

“‘Fifteen!’ repeated the young girl. ‘If you will not give me that sum, I will go to the jeweler and sell the setting. I shall, indeed, lose it forever, but at least I shall not be defrauded. Decide quickly, sir, will you, or not?’

“‘Well, then—twelve pounds, for your sake; but it is a sacrifice.’

“The young girl made no further reply, but took the medallion from the table, and with a determined air, turned her back upon the obstinate usurer.

“‘Stop, stop!’ cried the old knave, seeing his prize about to slip through his fingers. ‘Not so fast, my child! Let it be fifteen pounds. It is true, I sacrifice good money, but since it is you, give me the thing.’

“The young girl did not deign to prolong the conversation with the false old niggard. In silence she laid the medallion again on the

table, from which the pawnbroker snatched it as eagerly as a bird of prey seizes his booty.

“I had watched the whole proceeding with the liveliest interest, and now a hope sprang up within me, for the fulfillment of which I ardently longed. The young girl was to receive fifteen pounds ; I and two others of my sisters lay tied together in a package at the top of the chest ; there were, it is true, a dozen similar packages around us ; still it was possible the old man might take us to pay my favorite, and with great anxiety I awaited the decisive moment. The usurer shuffled the bundles over, took up first one and then another, and still another, but laid them all down again. At last my turn came, he clutched us, weighed us in his hand, and after a short hesitation threw us, with a reluctant tremor, upon the table. He might not have decided even then, had not the young girl just at the moment of his hesitation expressed her impatience by the exclamation—

“‘Please, sir, do not keep me waiting any longer!’

“It was so hard for the old pawnbroker to part with us, that he would perhaps have laid us down again, like the other packages, but my good fortune prevailed, and at last I found myself, as I had so greatly desired, in the white hand of my dear young friend. I crumpled and cracked for joy. But the young girl, who of course had no suspicion of my feelings, hid me quickly and carefully in her little caba, which she carried upon her left arm, pressed me close to her heart, held me fast as if to make sure of not losing me, and hurried away with light, swift steps.

“I saw nothing—darkness reigned around me; nevertheless, I was quite happy that such a favor had been granted to me, and I pressed as tenderly close to the heart of my new possessor, as if I could in that way have testified to her my sympathy. Time did not pass slowly

in that dark prison, for I had so much to think of, to imagine and to conjecture. Yet I observed that it must have been nearly an hour before we at last entered a house, and ascended many flights of stairs. A door creaked, then our new owner took us out and laid us on a table ; and at last I had an opportunity partially to satisfy my curiosity concerning the young girl.

“ Alas ! I saw, at the first glance, that I had made no mistake in my conjectures as to the poverty and distresses of my dear girl. How poor—how small and close was the room in which she lived ! No picture was on the wall ; no ornament, save a little piece of looking-glass, fastened to a piece of pasteboard, before which my favorite no doubt arranged her toilet when obliged to go out ; as, for example, to the shop of my former possessor. Articles of furniture were few and very poor. By the little window stood a chair and a table, both roughly

made of wood; an old worm-eaten cupboard stood against one wall; in a corner on the floor lay a rough straw sack, and in the back part of this simple chamber hung a calico curtain, which apparently divided a little sleeping-room from the rest of the apartment. Other refinement there was none. None, except that on the table by the window lay a half-finished piece of elegant embroidery, which seemed to have owed its existence to the skillful and artistic fingers of my darling girl.

“And she herself, where was she now? Ah! there she stood listening by the curtain; her pretty delicate head bowed, her veil thrown back, her light brown hair falling in graceful confusion over her pale cheeks; she stood there and listened for a moment. All was still; I heard no sound until the young girl drew the curtain a little way back. Then I saw a poor-looking bed, stretched upon which was the wasted form of a youth, perhaps a year younger

than the maiden. He appeared to be sleeping; his eyes were closed, and his white, delicately veined hands were folded upon the pillow, as if before he slept he had prayed. At the head of his bed I now perceived a little girl of about nine years, who seemed to be watching the boy's slumber. As the curtain was drawn, she sprang forward to meet the darling of my heart, exclaiming, softly—

“‘Helen, dear sister! are you here at last?’

“‘Hush, hush, Mary!’ said Helen, with a gesture of warning. ‘Do not wake poor brother William! All night he lay in a fever, and never closed his eyes. Do not let us disturb him, Mary! Come here—his slumber is precious!’

“‘Yes, yes!’ answered the little one, nodding her fair head, and followed her sister into the other part of the room, letting the curtain fall behind them. I could now see the little girl distinctly. She had a delicate, almost

sickly appearance, blue eyes and shining hair like her sister's, and her coarse attire seemed as little suited to her as the calico dress of Helen, which was exposed to full view when she laid aside her bonnet and shawl. From all that I saw, I understood that the poor children must formerly have been in better circumstances, and must have experienced—perhaps at no distant time—a very sad reverse. I was very anxious to know more about them, and lent an attentive ear to the conversation of the sisters.

“I lay, as I have said, with the other notes, upon the table, and as Mary caught sight of us, she uttered a half-repressed exclamation of joy—

“‘Oh, how much money!’ she cried. ‘We can live a long while on that, Helen!’

“‘Yes, Mary, quite a long time,’ replied Helen; ‘at least, I hope, until brother William is well again. And after that we shall not be

in distress ; for we are young and can work. Whoever is diligent, the Lord says, shall not suffer want.'

" ' But you have worked hard for a week, Helen,' answered Mary ; ' for a whole week, all day and half of the night, and yet it was not enough.'

" ' Yes, that is true ; but it is because William is sick, and cannot help me,' replied Helen. ' But we will have patience ! I have called for a doctor, and I hope he will soon cure William. Then I can work at my embroidery, and William can paint the pretty little pictures for which he finds such ready sale, and you, too, Mary, can help me in my work. Then, indeed, all will be well ; nor shall we need any assistance from others, much as we have wished and hoped for such aid when we had reason to expect it.'

" ' Oh, how cruel it is of Ralph, how mean to have neglected us !' said Mary. ' I cannot for-

get how you came home, pale and weeping, the day he repulsed you so sternly—the wicked, hard-hearted creature! I cannot bear the thought of him!

“‘Hush, hush, Mary! you will waken William,’ Helen interposed in a warning tone. ‘Why do you excite yourself so? Our Father in heaven, to whose protection dear mother committed us on her death-bed, has not forsaken us. He never will forsake us! William will surely recover. If only the doctor would come! I gave him very particular directions how to find our lodgings; but he stays so long, and he promised me he would come directly. I hope he has not forgotten!’

“‘Helen!’ cried at this moment a feeble voice behind the curtain.

“‘Oh, William, we have wakened you!’ exclaimed Helen, alarmed. ‘But when the doctor comes, we should be obliged to do so; perhaps it is better as it is. I am coming, dear brother!’

"She hurried to the alcove, drew back the curtain, and with sisterly tenderness kissed her brother's white forehead. He looked up with a faint but loving smile.

"‘My dear Helen,’ he said, warmly. ‘Here you are again—my comfort in suffering.’

"‘Yes, Willy; and I bring help for you,’ replied Helen. ‘Courage, brother, we shall try to cure your disease. See, here is money, and a doctor will be here soon to prescribe some medicine for you. Be comforted, Willy, you will soon recover!’

"‘So much money!’ exclaimed William, looking with astonishment at the bank-notes. ‘Fifteen pounds, Helen! Where did you get such a sum. Oh, it must be—I see! Ralph has at last seen how wrong he was in refusing your request. Is it not so, Helen?’

"Helen sadly shook her head.

"‘The money is not from Ralph,’ she answered. ‘Since he first repulsed me I have

never been to see him. I could not—my heart rebelled against it.'

“‘Ah! then he must have treated you very badly!’ murmured the youth, with an angry look. ‘I will reckon with him when I am well again. To be hard with you, my sweet, kind, gentle Helen! He shall answer me for that, the miserly, thankless wretch!’

“‘Do not speak of it, Willy; do not think of it. You become excited, and I know you have double pain afterward. Do not think of Ralph, dear brother. Think rather how soon you will be well and up again.’

“‘You are right, dear Helen. I will wait until I am well,’ answered William. ‘But if all that money is not from Ralph, where did you get it? Tell me, dear Helen. It makes me uneasy.’

“‘Surely you know, Willy. Dear mother’s medallion picture!’

“‘Oh, you cannot have sold that!’ cried

William, alarmed. 'The last memento we possess of our mother!'

" 'No, no, no, Willy!' replied Helen, quickly, taking out a little picture, which had lost its setting. 'Here is the portrait. I could only part from that with my life. But the setting, Willy, it was of gold and precious stones, and added nothing to the value of the picture in our eyes. We needed money, for our last penny was spent, and we must have a doctor for you; so I took the setting from the portrait and carried it—well, you know where.'

" 'Yes; to the pawnbroker!' replied William. 'To the pawnbroker—the last resource of the unfortunate. Well, sister, we still have the dear portrait. We can do without the setting; and, when I shall be well again, I will not rest until I earn enough to redeem it from the usurer's. How glad I am that you kept back this treasure!'

" He took the picture with trembling hands

and pressed upon it a long, tender kiss. A tear stood in Helen's eye, but she turned away, so that her brother might not see it, and learn how painful it had been to her to despoil the beloved memento.

“‘Never mind, Willy,’ she said directly, in a quiet manner. ‘Some sacrifice was necessary to purchase health for you; and it is my purpose, also, not to rest until the medallion is complete again. But listen—I hear footsteps. It must be the doctor coming up the stairs.’

“It was indeed the physician; a kindly old man with serious, intelligent eyes, a benevolent smile and snow-white hair resting in abundant locks upon his cheeks, that were still fresh, notwithstanding his advanced age. He paused a moment at the door, scrutinizing the room and its inmates, and then stepped quietly to the bedside.

“‘Ah, this is our patient, my dear miss,’ he said to Helen, with a kind smile. ‘Let us see,

young gentleman, what is the matter with you.'

"The examination was soon over. The physician prescribed the necessary remedies, and gave the best hopes of recovery. Then, after chatting a moment or two with Helen and Mary, he took his hat and cane, and left to pay another visit. Helen accompanied him to the door, and timidly offered him some money in payment for his trouble, which he, however, refused with a smile.

" 'Never mind that for the present, my dear miss,' said the benevolent old man. 'We will settle our accounts when our patient has recovered. I will be here to-morrow. Good-by!'

"With these words he disappeared, closing the door behind him. With a slightly perturbed countenance, Helen returned to her brother's bedside.

" 'He would accept nothing,' she said, laying down the money.

“ William looked surprised.

“ ‘ Ah, he must have noticed that we are poor ! ’ he said. ‘ He is certainly a kind, good man. Let us love him, and thus show our gratitude. Some day, I hope, I may be able to acknowledge his kindness in some more substantial way. Yes, indeed, true Christian benevolence shone in his face. I see there *are* good people in the world, among the evil ones. ’

“ Whether by the consoling friendship of the generous doctor for the poor, helpless orphans, whether by the remedies he ordered, or by the better and more constant care which Helen was enabled, by the money she received for the setting of the precious medallion, to bestow upon her brother—in short, William’s recovery progressed rapidly. In eight days he was able to leave his bed, and after a fortnight to engage in light work. He painted pretty pictures in water colors, and Helen carried them out for sale, ten or twelve at a time. They made no

great profit on them, it is true; still, with what Helen received for her beautiful and artistic embroidery, there was sufficient to supply the three children with the necessaries of life, so that they were very rarely obliged to have recourse to their little treasure—the sum paid by the old pawnbroker for the medallion.

“The brother and sisters led a quiet, simple and industrious life, interrupted only by the occasional visits of the good doctor, which were continued long after William’s health had been restored by his friendly aid. He appeared to have conceived a sincere affection for the young orphans, and they returned this affection with a warmth which gave the kind old gentleman visible pleasure. When he came, little Mary hung caressingly on his arm, Helen cordially pressed his hand, William left pencils, colors, pictures, and everything, in order to devote himself entirely to the entertainment of his friend. The old doctor refused any compensa-

tion for his professional services, in the most good-humored, but at the same time most decided manner. What less could the poor orphans do than to love and esteem him for his disinterested Christian kindness? So they always received him with the greatest joy, and when his visit was over I heard nothing but the praises of his goodness, his beneficence, his unwavering friendship. The good doctor and the beloved departed parents,—these were the inexhaustible themes of the conversation of the three orphans.

“Thus passed a long time. I saw through the windows the snow fall upon the roofs; I saw the great icicles, a yard long, that hung from the eaves; I saw the snow disappear, and the twittering swallows return from distant lands, skimming swift as arrows through the air, warmed once more by the breath of spring. I saw the topmost branches of the trees renew their festal summer array of fresh, green foliage;

but in the quiet lodging of the affectionate orphans there was no change, except that the roll of bank-notes lessened visibly, because fuel was dear, and they had been obliged to buy warm clothing for the winter. This, however, did not greatly disturb the peaceful serenity of the young people. Helen comforted her brother and sister, as one after another of my sisters was sent away, by saying that when summer should come the days would grow longer, and they could do more work; that they would not need to spend money for wood and coals, and might be able to lay up enough to provide comfortably for the following winter. So the good doctor, when he occasionally inquired whether they were in need of anything, always received the same answer—they wanted for nothing; so that he was not able to carry out any plans for their benefit. Helen only accepted occasional trifles from him, a pretty ribbon, a neck-tie, needles of a fine sort, and

such like articles ; but the doctor never ventured to offer more valuable gifts, as he perfectly understood the honorable delicacy of the orphans, who would far rather earn their bread by labor than accept help from a stranger, except when forced to do so by inexorable necessity, as in the case of William's sickness.

“ And now the summer had come. There was one morning gloriously fresh and lovely—such a morning as Helen in former days used to greet with quiet delight. The sun shone beautifully, the swallows twittered before the windows, the sky was of the deepest blue, and a soft breeze rustled amid the tree-tops. Everything appeared inviting to cheerfulness, and I pleased myself by thinking of the happy face Helen would wear, when I should see her. Contrary to my expectations, however, she came from the alcove with a very sad countenance. William and Mary also appeared dejected, and all three went quietly about their work, exchanging

but a few words; I even saw Helen and William brush away a tear from their eyes once in a while. What misfortune can have happened? I thought. I have seen nothing to account for this!

“Half the morning had passed in this manner, when suddenly steps were heard without, and the good doctor entered the quiet, sad little chamber, with his usual kindly mein. He, too, at once observed the change in the manner of the orphans; his cheerful smile disappeared, and he inquired anxiously what trouble had befallen them.

“Helen, William, and Mary looked at one another; the hitherto repressed tears of all three burst forth at once, and they fell weeping into one another’s arms. The kind physician, much astonished at their unusual display of feeling, tried to soothe and to console them, and inquired so earnestly and so affectionately as to the cause of their grief, that Helen, drying

her tears, turned at last to him, striving to recover her composure :

“ ‘Do not be offended with us, dear doctor,’ she said, in a gentle but still trembling voice ; ‘this is a very painful day for us. It is just a year to-day since we lost our beloved mother. Our grief is renewed to-day, and seems redoubled ; it is in vain that we have tried to repress our feelings, and to conceal them from one another ; they seem all the stronger for it.’

“ ‘You are right, Helen,’ responded William ; ‘although we have not spoken a word of remembrance, we could not help thinking of our loss. I have read it in your eyes, as you no doubt have in mine ; we have all thought of our mother this morning, and it would have been better to have spoken of her, rather than to brood in silence over our sad thoughts.’

“ ‘Poor children ! poor children !’ exclaimed the doctor, tenderly pressing the hands of his young friends. ‘Indeed, the loss of a mother

is the greatest one that young hearts can know !
Your mother must have been very kind and loving to you ?’

“ ‘She was an angel, doctor!’ exclaimed William, passionately. ‘No angel in heaven could be more tender and loving! How she cared for us, how she watched over us, what privations she endured for us, and how she cheered us, when our great misfortune came upon us—you remember, Helen! Ah, how much love we feel for our mother, when we think of all that!’

“ ‘Of what, my children, of what?’ inquired the doctor, sympathizingly. ‘I have never before asked you any questions about your former circumstances, although I could easily see that you had once occupied a very different position in life. But to-day, finding you in tears and in grief, I am sure you will not attribute to idle curiosity my desire to learn more of your earlier history. Pray speak freely

to me—tell me all ; confide your sorrows to the heart of a friend who knows how to keep your secrets, and you will lighten your own bosoms. You certainly know that I have your welfare at heart, and that you need have no reserve with me.'

“ ‘ We do, we do, my dear doctor,’ replied Helen ; ‘ we know that we need have no secrets from you, even were there in this case anything to be hidden. But any one might know what our lot has been. Our father was a wealthy merchant, who traded both with the East and West Indies. His name was Elliot. No one thought, in the midst of all our prosperity, how quickly and how easily it might be swept away. Our father was wise, good, and prudent. How good he was, you may know by his having taken our cousin, the son of his brother, who had died in great poverty, into his house, and brought him up like one of his own children. Ralph Elliot grew up

among us ; father provided him with everything, gave him the means of studying, settled him as an advocate, and secured his future so well that Ralph is now in easy circumstances, while we, his benefactor's children, must struggle with want.'

" 'Ralph Elliot!' interrupted the doctor. 'I am acquainted with him, and I know he makes a great deal of money. Did he do nothing for you when you were overtaken by loss?'

" 'Nothing,' replied Helen. 'So long as my father lived in affluence, Ralph visited us almost daily, and was regarded as a child of the family, just as he had always been. But our prosperity waned. Without any faults of his own, my father experienced heavy losses, through the bankruptcy of others. This he might have borne, but now a new misfortune happened. He had commissioned Ralph to insure two vessels for him, laden with costly merchandise,

and bound for South America. Ralph, to whose faithfulness and honesty my father would have confided anything, took the money for the insurance of the vessels; but, instead of fulfilling my father's commission, he retained the sum, and the vessels were not insured. This was the cause of the greatest trouble. The two ships, which contained all that was left of my father's wealth, were overtaken by a storm, shattered and sunk, when scarcely out of port. The news of their loss soon spread, and was fully corroborated. My father was but little disturbed at first by the loss of his merchandise, supposing the vessels to have been insured. He went to Ralph, and now the whole extent of his misfortune appeared. Ralph was obliged to confess that he had retained the insurance premiums, expecting that the vessels would perform their voyage safely, in which case no one would have inquired after the money; and my poor father,

who had relied so implicitly upon Ralph's integrity, now found himself ruined.

“ ‘ His health had been terribly shocked by the reverses he had before experienced ; this last blow, rendered the more severe by the treachery of one so loved and trusted, completed the wreck. He uttered not a single reproach to Ralph, but came home broken-hearted. Three days after he died of grief, leaving our mother and us in sore distress. Our father's honorable name was all that remained to us. The sale of all that we possessed just sufficed to pay the claims of his creditors ; nothing was left for our support. We took refuge in a small lodging-place ; we worked, we suffered privations ; our mother would have made any sacrifice rather than to ask the assistance of strangers. The burden was too great for her. She neither murmured nor wept ; but grief consumed her life, as it had our father's. At last she became too weak

to leave her bed, and a year ago, this day, we wept over her, dead. Her last words were a blessing upon us; and now we were all alone in the world—orphans, whom none pitied, whom none cared for! Oh, doctor, if we had not then looked up to God, the Father of the fatherless, the Helper of the afflicted, we should have been crushed by our sorrows!

“‘But Ralph, what of Ralph, my dear Helen?’ asked the doctor.

“‘Ralph troubled himself no further about us; he never entered our house again,’ Helen continued, wiping away her tears. ‘My mother entreated him at least to repay to us the sum of money that he had received from father for the insurance premiums; but he basely denied the whole transaction, leaving us in our poor and helpless condition.’

“‘The wretch,’ exclaimed the worthy doctor, indignantly. ‘Why did she not compel him to restore what he had robbed you of?’

“‘I tried to induce him to do so, after our mother died,’ said Helen. ‘I called on him, and spoke to him of the heavy debt, during my brother William’s illness; but he repulsed me abruptly, again denying all that had passed, and pretending to know nothing of the matter. My father had taken no receipt from him, for how could he mistrust Ralph, whom he regarded as his own son, and who owed him so much gratitude? Ralph, therefore, denied the transaction, demanding proofs of his having received the money from my father. I possessed no proofs, and was obliged to leave him without having accomplished anything. Since that day, I have never seen him. Thank God, that He has blessed our efforts, so that we have not suffered the greatest of wants!’

“The good physician quite lost his usual composure, and burst out in great wrath against Ralph, calling him a shameful, worthless villain. William, who, during his sister’s recital had

become very pale, now sprang from his chair in great excitement, and paced rapidly up and down the little room.

“‘Helen!’ he cried, ‘why have you never before told me a word of this? It is fearful! The thankless, treacherous— Doctor, I have no words to express the wickedness of such a fraud! And this is the first I have heard of it—oh, Helen, why so late?’

“‘Because I know you so well, Willy, my dear Willy!’ replied Helen. ‘I feared your hasty anger, feared that you might go to Ralph to call him to account, and so bring on a terrible and, alas, a useless scene. You were sick; even yet you have not recovered your usual health and strength, and I was not willing, needlessly, to excite you. Let it pass, Willy; leave the evil man to the dealings of a righteous God, as I do.’

“‘No, no, I cannot, indeed!’ cried William, passionately. ‘I will go to him, I will demand

of him our rights, and if he refuses me, I will let him feel the weight of my contempt. Worthless man! He robs his benefactor, ruins him, kills him by his deceit, and feels no touch of penitence for his shameful deed! Had he repented, sister; had he rendered up the ill-gotten gain; had he shown to us, the children of his benefactor, but one evidence of sympathy, I might forgive him; as it is, every drop of blood in my veins boils, when I think of his heartless baseness.'

"'Calm yourself, my boy,' interposed the doctor, soothingly, while Helen appeared greatly distressed that she had not still longer kept her secret. 'In such a case as this, you can accomplish nothing by rage and violence; other means must be employed against such a man as Ralph. Let me try, my children; I have friends, and among them is a very skillful lawyer. I will speak with him of the matter. If there is any way to compel Ralph to give

up the money, my friend will find it out. Wait patiently, until we hear what he proposes; he knows more about such matters than any of us, and we may safely trust to his judgment. Do you know, Helen, how large a sum your father entrusted to Ralph?

“ ‘Yes, doctor, it was exactly two thousand pounds sterling,’ answered Helen. ‘Mother often said to me: “My poor Helen, if we could only have saved that money, I could now die peacefully, for I should know that you poor orphans were at least placed beyond the reach of want.”’

“ ‘Good! two thousand pounds is quite a handsome sum, and I hope we may be able to secure it for you, my children,’ said the kind doctor. ‘But, no rashness, Willy! Wait at least until we have my friend’s advice, and after that, you may act as you please.’

“William’s first transport of anger had been already calmed by the judicious reasoning of

his aged friend; and, seeing that it would indeed be well to have a lawyer's advice, he gave the desired promise, that he would wait patiently for it. The doctor left; and for the rest of the day, the children talked only of the beloved mother, whom God's mysterious providence had taken from their side a year before. Many a tear fell for her, many a loving word of praise was spoken of her; from all I heard, one could easily infer that she had been a noble, pious woman, and a tender and self-sacrificing mother to her children, whose fond and faithful remembrance she had richly deserved.

“On the next morning the doctor came again, but with a dejected manner and a troubled countenance—

“‘I bring little hope,’ he said. ‘My learned friend shrugged his shoulders when I represented to him the particulars of our case, and expressed his opinion that we could expect nothing satisfactory from a lawsuit, if no ac-

knowledgment on Ralph's part, of the receipt of the money, was to be found. Such a lawsuit would, besides, be very expensive, and he thought we had better try to come to an amicable agreement with Ralph, than to trust to the chances of litigation, the result of which is, unfortunately, worse than doubtful.'

" 'Yes, yes,' said Helen; 'I recollect now, that my mother one day spoke to a lawyer on the subject, and received almost exactly the same answer. Well, we must be content; the loss of money is a trouble not so difficult to forget, if God will but preserve our health.'

" William was silent for a few minutes, and then said—

" 'Helen, you know I am not avaricious, yet it would be a great satisfaction to me, if Ralph could be prevailed upon to give up the money he has so shamefully obtained. We should be spared much heavy anxiety for the future, and,

at any rate, I will make the attempt: I will go to Ralph, Helen.'

" 'Oh, no, do not go!' pleaded Helen, in alarm, 'Ralph is so rough and stern, he might abuse you, and that would only add new trouble. Mother and I have both tried in vain to persuade him.'

" 'I know it,' replied William; 'but I know, too, that every man has a conscience, and I will attack his conscience with the power of truth. Do not fear, Helen, that I will be rash! Oh, no! But I will set his own actions plainly before him; and, if I cannot touch his feelings, then I will leave him to the just retribution that will come some day. But I *must* make one attempt; I feel that I cannot be contented until I have spoken with Ralph face to face.'

" 'William is right,' said the doctor; 'Do not prevent him, Helen; let him go. He has self-command and intelligence enough to speak in this important matter. Go, go, Willy! May

heaven grant your words the power to touch a hardened heart, and to awaken a slumbering conscience! Perhaps when Ralph meets the son of the man whom he betrayed and loaded with misfortune, his better feelings may be aroused; perhaps he will try to make good at least a part of what he has fraudulently taken from your parents and yourselves.'

"Helen still appeared to dissent, as she had not the slightest hope of her brother's success; but she made no further objection, nor did William stay to argue any longer, but left with the doctor. He was absent for some hours; it was afternoon when he returned, pale and with eyes sparkling with anger, and told—"

"Stop, sister," interrupted the second bank-note, "it is now my turn. I have found to my astonishment, that the story *I* have to relate stands in the closest connection with your own. I know that Ralph Elliot better than you do; I

was for a long time in his power; I was present when William, that good, noble-hearted boy visited him, and caused him, in spite of his baseness, to tremble in his very soul. I have witnessed other scenes, too, which appear nearly related to the fortunes of your poor orphans, and I am sure you will allow me to take up the thread of the narrative, and carry it on from the point at which I interrupted you."

"Certainly, my dear sister," replied the first bank-note, settling herself more comfortably upon her tiny golden throne. "I am, indeed, quite curious to hear your recital; as William, angry and excited, only told his sister that his attempt to arouse any good feeling in Ralph's bosom had been utterly in vain. Let us then hear what you have to tell us."

The second bank-note had just opened her gentle little mouth, to satisfy the curiosity of her sisters, when the hammer of the bronze armorer on the clock gave notice that the

dawn of morning was approaching. Life seemed at once to stir in the house—steps were heard without, in the corridor, and the handle of the door rattled.

“Our time is out,” said the first bank-note, “human beings are coming; the noise of their life will now re-commence, and we must go back into our little home. I am chilly, too, and tired! To-morrow night, my sisters, when midnight strikes, and all is once more silent, we will continue our conversation. For the present I wish you a pleasant repose.”

The two others nodded; all three slipped into the casket, and the lid closed upon them just as the housemaid opened the door, broom and dust-brush in hand, to put the room in order and make the fire. But she saw nothing of the Three Bank-notes.



CHAPTER II.

“ They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil ; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”—I Timothy, vi. 9, 10.

THE hammer rang twelve times upon the anvil ; it was midnight. The lid of the golden casket sprung open, the three tiny gray figures in their little paper mantles stepped out and seated themselves upon the arabesque, nodding to one another. Silence reigned, as on the preceding night ; no human creature disturbed the conversation of the small sprites, the second of whom commenced her recital without delay.

“The beginning of my life passed much as your own did, my dear sister,” said she. “Silent and ignorant I came into the world, passed through various hands, found myself far oftener in large and beautiful mansions than in lowly cottages, and came at last into the possession of that Ralph Elliot, whom you have mentioned. I was, indeed, one of those very two thousand pounds which the unfortunate father of the three orphans entrusted to his thankless foster son, for the payment of the insurance premiums on the vessels bound for America.

“‘Pray attend to this business immediately, dear Ralph,’ I heard the old man say. ‘Those two ships are my last hope; the weal or woe of my family depends upon them.’

“‘Make yourself easy, uncle,’ replied Ralph. ‘I will go at once to the office.’

“Mr. Elliot left his nephew without taking any acknowledgment of the receipt of the money. When he was gone, Ralph regarded

us, as we lay upon his table, with a lowering, covetous eye, and I thought, as I observed his expression, 'surely the poor man who has bestowed his confidence here is deceived! I and my sisters will never find our way to the insurance office.' And such, indeed, was the case.

"'What a fool I should be to let all this money pass out of my hand for nothing,' muttered Ralph, after staring at us for a long time, and counting us more than once. 'The ships will go safely enough, and who will ever inquire after the insurance premium? But then, if they *should* be lost! Bah, how unlikely! And even if they were—why Elliot has no receipt for the money, and I can deny that he ever gave it to me!'

"And he hastily gathered us up, in order to thrust us into his safe, but conscience checked him, and he hesitated.

"'It would be bad, very bad, indeed, if those

ships were to go down,' he muttered, gazing absently before him. 'Elliot would be a ruined man, and his family would share in his distress. That is certain, for I know he has met with heavy losses of late. But for myself! I need money, and here it is, as it were, showered down into my lap. Barnet will come shortly, and demand the money he won from me the other night, and if I do not not pay him I shall be disgraced, branded; while for Elliot there is still hope, the vessels may make their voyage in safety. It *must* be done! It is too much for me; why *did* he bring me this money, and take no receipt for it? Ha! there is Barnet already, the rascal!

"The door burst open, and a man of an evil countenance entered the room. His manner was haughty and insolent. As he opened the door two suspicious-looking men were plainly to be seen outside, men who were as much like policemen as one egg is like another.

“‘My money, Elliot!’ he cried, without any other salutation. ‘You lost fifteen hundred pounds to me—here is your acknowledgment!’

“‘Exactly; and out there are the grippers, who are to take me along in case I have not the wherewithal to pay you—eh, Barnet?’ retorted Ralph Elliot, with a sneer. ‘Oh, you are a precious scoundrel! You cheated me at play, and now you think you have me in your power, and are not afraid to show all your malice!’

“The man addressed did not appear at all confused, but took Ralph’s rough accusations as something natural and ordinary.

“‘Never mind all that, Elliot!’ he replied. ‘My money, or you go to jail! I have no indulgence for worthless debtors.’

“‘I know, I know,’ answered Ralph Elliot, who had, at the beginning of the conversation, placed himself so that Barnet could not see us bank-notes on the table. ‘I am going to make

you a proposition, Barnet: take five hundred pounds, and be satisfied; if you do not, you will not get a penny!

“‘And be cheated out of my money by a fellow like you?’ exclaimed Barnet, with an oath. ‘Not I; you will pay the whole sum, or walk off to jail, I tell you!’

“‘Very good; and you will get nothing, I tell you!’ returned Ralph, coolly. ‘I have no more than five hundred pounds, and if you are not satisfied with that sum, I shall keep it. Decide quickly! It is all one to me whether you say yes or no!’

“The other seemed to hesitate.

“‘I tell you what, Ralph,’ he said at length, ‘make it six hundred, and I will be satisfied.’

“‘No; five hundred, and not a penny over, for that is all I have.’

“‘Give me the money, then!’ cried Barnet, in a passion.

“‘My I O U, first,’ said Ralph.

“Barnet threw a paper upon the table, which the other seized with a triumphant laugh, as he tossed a package of a hundred five-pound notes at his creditor, while he tore the acknowledgment into the smallest possible bits.

“‘So now we are at quits,’ he said, laughing, ‘and you have allowed yourself to be led by the nose like an ox. See here! here lie fifteen hundred pounds more; you might have had all your money if you had been a little sharper.’

“Barnet’s rage almost choked him; he swore he would have the other thousand pounds, or Ralph should go to the gallows in a week. Elliot only laughed at his impotent wrath; and as Barnet could not help seeing that he had over-reached himself by giving up the note, he at last took his departure, accompanied by his now useless constables. Ralph laughed to himself, snapped his fingers behind his discomfited creditor, and carelessly brushed us bank-notes aside.

“‘No use in any more parley with conscience,’ he said to himself, as he laid us in his safe, ‘the sum is broken now; after all, why was Elliot so careless as to trust me? Why need I care what becomes of his ships? If the worst comes to the worst, I have only to deny that I ever received the money.’

“And thus did the unprincipled man silence his better nature, and betray his benefactor, his second father, with as little remorse as he did the sharper, Barnet. I once heard a clergyman, in whose possession I remained for a short time, telling his children about a race of beings superior in power and wisdom to mortals—

“‘Some of them,’ he said, ‘are pure beings, and are sent by the Lord where Christians worship, to help men in times of temptation and trial; others are evil, and strive continually to lead mortals away from purity and happiness.’ He said that ‘they linger, invisible but

full of interest, around the dwellers on earth, and, no doubt, often contend for the mastery over human souls. If a mortal chooses the right way, and overcomes temptation, the good angel cheers him and ministers to him,' as the clergyman said they once did to the Lord, when He was on earth in the form of man; 'but if the choice should be evil, then the good angel can but return in grief to Him who sent him, while the evil one laughs in fearful triumph!'

"If all this be true, what sadness of the pure spirits, what terrible rejoicing of the wicked ones must there have been, unknown to Ralph Elliot, over his miserable transgression! For me, I had seen and heard enough of him to detest him from my bank-note heart, more than words could express. I longed for wings, that I might fly away from him—I hoped that I might soon come into other hands. But I was obliged to remain in his possession much

longer than I expected. I had built my hopes upon the knowledge that he was a gambler; but I soon found that, although he played much and high, he won far oftener than he lost. I am convinced that he was as unscrupulous at the gaming table as he was everywhere else. Besides, he was very miserly indeed, and, except at play, seldom parted with his bank-notes and guineas. For these reasons I remained a long time in his safe, and had abundant opportunities for learning to understand his character—no very agreeable study, as you may suppose. And thus I have learned some incidents which may serve to complete the story of the three orphans, which you, my sister, have commenced to relate.

“Ralph Elliot, a young man of twenty-four or twenty-five years of age, concealed under a showy and glittering exterior, a base and worthless character. He resembled a false coin or note, which, although fresher and brighter in

its external appearance than the genuine money, has no intrinsic value. His life was one unbroken chain of idleness, villainy, and shameful fraud, practiced, in his profession of attorney, upon all who knew so little of him, or were so unwary as to confide in him. By these means, and by gambling, he made a great deal of money; so long as I remained in his possession, large sums were never wanting, piled up in the safe beside me. I believe that but once in his life did he allow himself to be cheated by a more cunning rogue than himself; I mean by this Barnet, whom I saw on the day I came into his hands, and whom I was to see again, some weeks later. Barnet seemed to have plundered him pretty completely, for when I was put into the safe, there were but a few silver coins there; it was filled up, however, within a few days after that. Every morning he brought considerable amounts to the safe, and I began to hope that he would

make good the wrong he had done his benefactor. But though the five hundred pounds he had given Barnet had long been replaced, the whole sum more than doubled, yet never did Ralph take any steps toward fulfilling his uncle's trust. I longed to implore him to obey the voice of conscience, but our lips speak not the language of men, and my low, warning whisper could never reach his ear. There might yet have been time to repair the evil, but in a few weeks it was forever *too late*. One day Mr. Elliot called on Ralph, pale but composed.

“‘My vessels have been wrecked, my dear son,’ said the old gentleman. ‘How fortunate that I provided for the insurance on the cargo! Give me the policy, Ralph, that I may go and demand the money.’

“Hardened as Ralph Elliot was, this time the blow was too severe and unexpected. He was pale as death, and poor Mr. Elliot read in

his countenance the story of this crowning misfortune.

“‘Unhappy boy!’ he gasped out. ‘You have forgotten or neglected to attend to the insurance!’

“Ralph dared not, could not deny it.

“‘Oh, what a fearful stroke this is!’ exclaimed Mr. Elliot, in tones of distress, and wringing his hands. ‘Ralph, pray to God to forgive you for this neglect. I hope I may; but, alas, my poor wife, my unfortunate children—we are all ruined! ruined! ruined!’

“Distracted by the overwhelming news, Mr. Elliot did not think of asking the unfaithful nephew for the sum intrusted to him. I do not suppose that, at *that* moment, Ralph could have refused it; he was himself too much surprised and confused. But Mr. Elliot went away, leaving the money, and never returned. I know now why that was, since three days later he died of a broken heart. But Ralph,

meanwhile, recovered himself; and when, at a later day, first the widow and afterward the daughter of his benefactor came to ask him for the money, he unblushingly denied the whole transaction, and turned from his door those who had formerly loaded him with benefits, forbidding them ever to set foot in his premises again. The poor women, having no evidence to produce on their side, had to go away weeping. The evil man was triumphant, and for some time no more was said about the money. One day Barnet came again to Ralph, who received him, at first, rather coolly—

“‘What do you want here?’ he said. ‘We have nothing more to do with each other.’

“‘Don’t be a fool, Ralph,’ returned the other, in that insolent manner which appeared natural to him. ‘I bring you news worth a million, and I will sell it to you for a hundred pounds.’

“‘Pshaw!’ returned Ralph, carelessly, ‘chaff

doesn't catch an old bird like me. Carry your news to some better market than this.'

" 'Well, then, I'll take ten guineas for it,' said Barnet, laughing.

" 'Not from me.'

" 'Five then. Nothing give, nothing have, Ralph. Don't stop to consider; my news is worth a thousand times as much as that to you.'

" Ralph became at last really curious. He took five guineas from the safe, and tossed them towards Barnet, saying—

" 'Speak, then. But if I find that you are only taking me in, then look out for the consequences.'

" 'Leave your threatening, Ralph; that don't go down with me,' said Barnet, coolly pocketing the gold pieces. 'You have an uncle in the East Indies.'

" 'Well?'

" 'A nabob, immensely rich, and without any family.'

“‘Well, then, what of him?’

“‘Nothing but this: that a friend of mine has written to me that this nabob, your uncle, has set sail from Calcutta for London, with all his wealth, in order to pass his last years among his relatives, in his native country. Now you know all, and I suppose you are wise enough to understand what to do with such news. The children of your other uncle, whom, if I mistake not, you yourself have cast into poverty, will be glad enough to meet Sir Robert Elliot, fresh from India, with a ship-load of gold and silver and diamonds.’

“‘They must not know of his arrival,’ cried Ralph. ‘Thanks for this intelligence, Barnet; it is worth fully five guineas, and I will make use of it. I’ll take possession of the old gentleman, and keep him so well engaged that he will never think of asking after his other relatives.’

“‘Good luck to you, Ralph,’ said Barnet, laughing. ‘In the meantime, I will try what

luck your five guineas will bring me; they came just in the nick of time, for I will confess to you that I lost my last farthing yesterday at cards.'

" 'This is no false news you have trumped up to deceive me, is it, Barnet?' said Ralph, with rising suspicion.

" 'No, no,' replied Barnet, 'here is the letter; read it yourself. There is no deceit about it, but you may think yourself happy that I lost all my money yesterday, else I should scarcely have come to you with the news; our friendship is not quite so disinterested. So good-by to you, Ralph.'

" With these words, and a laugh, the fellow went out and left Ralph alone. The latter seemed quite excited by the intelligence he had received. He strode up and down his room, muttering to himself.

" 'He must not see them. He must not know that they are in London, that they are

alive. I will tell him they are all dead. He must leave all he has to me—to me alone. He certainly cannot live much longer; he must be nearly sixty, and the Indian climate makes people old before their time. I will take care of him; I can flatter him, pretend affection for him, win his favor in a thousand ways—he will make me his heir. Pshaw! what is it to me how my beggarly cousins get along in the world?’

“These words, and more, he uttered in broken sentences, rubbing his hands in joyful anticipation. He had always known full well that his father’s brother, Robert Elliot, had gone to India, and there become very rich; but it had never occurred to him that he might return to England. Unexpected as the news was, it was so much the more welcome. It appeared to him easy enough to gain the favor of the wealthy uncle, provided the other relatives could be kept out of the way. A meeting

with them, however, might spoil all his plans, especially if Helen or William should expose the fraud by which he had brought them to want. It must not be.

“‘No, no!’ he said to himself, ‘I will say that they are dead; and something extraordinary indeed must happen if the old man ever sees or hears of them. None but a fool will share with others, if he can enjoy anything alone.’

“As Ralph uttered these words, he heard a knock at the door, and a young man of perhaps fifteen years entered, slender and handsome, but somewhat pale. The appearance and manner of the youth were very prepossessing, but Ralph cast upon him a look of aversion, and shrunk back a step or two as he entered.

“‘William!’ he exclaimed, half in anger, half in confusion, ‘what do you want with me? What brings you here?’

“‘A little business, that can speedily be settled,’ replied the youth, quietly and earnestly.

“‘Business, with you?’ asked Ralph. ‘What can I have to do with you? I do not wish to be disturbed at present.’

“‘I will trouble you only until this affair, which should have been settled long ago, is finished,’ replied the boy again, as quietly as before. ‘Ralph, one question. Where are the two thousand pounds which my father intrusted to you for the insurance of his last two ships?’

“‘What do I know of his insurance? He gave no money to my charge; I know nothing about the matter,’ replied Ralph, with a bold, defiant air. ‘Go about your business, boy, and do not come here with a story like that, patched up to cover a begging errand.’

“‘It is false, Ralph,’ replied the son of the deceived and betrayed old man. ‘My father gave you two thousand pounds for the purpose I have named; you neither used them for that purpose, nor returned them, and I have

come at last, to demand the payment of the old debt.'

" 'Shameless boy,' cried Ralph. 'Have you proofs of the debt, as you call it?'

" 'None, but the word of my father—his word spoken to my mother on the death-bed, to which you brought him,' said William. 'You cannot accuse my father of lying, Ralph; your benefactor, who showed you so much kindness.'

" 'I do; he lied—as you do, and the whole tribe of you! Go, and never show your face here again, or ——,' and here he uttered an outrageous threat, 'go, I tell you!'

" I saw the flush of anger rise in William's pale face, but the sensible boy restrained himself with manly firmness, and said, in as temperate a manner as before—

" 'It is of no avail, Ralph, to dissimulate. I understand you. You *did* receive the money, and unless you would be a swindler, as well as the murderer of my father, you will restore

it to me. Give me that money, and you will never see any of us again.'

" 'Take that, boy!' cried Ralph, beside himself with rage, and struck the youth, pale as he was from recent illness, a violent blow in the face with his fist, caught him by the collar, dragged him to the door, and threw him down the stairs.

" I did not see him again; he did not return, but I heard his voice—

" 'Well, Ralph, I am too weak to contend with you by force, but my father, whom you have basely murdered—he is witness against you before the judgment seat of God.'

" With these words he went away. Ralph had heard them, as well as I; he turned pale, and his hair appeared for the moment to stand up with terror.

" 'The dead! the dead!' he faltered, and it was some time before he regained his usual composure. That strange thing which human

beings call conscience, what a mysterious power it seems to have, to disturb even the most reckless man! If, as I have heard say, there is another life after this one, in which a conscience stifled here awakens with redoubled force, how fearful must the punishment of the wicked be! I shudder to imagine myself surrounded by faces perpetually wearing the expression of Ralph's at that moment. That is my opinion as a bank-note.

"This incident, however, led to no good results. Ralph did not restore the money, but congratulated himself on being rid of his troublesome relatives, and continued to hope that their existence would remain unknown to the wealthy East India uncle, whose arrival he awaited daily in feverish anticipation. His longings were destined soon to be realized, but in another and far less pleasant manner than he so confidently expected.

"One morning, having finished his solitary

breakfast, he was seated, half reclining, in his easy office-chair, reading the newspapers of the day. Suddenly, with a loud exclamation, he started from his comfortable attitude, and began to read aloud, as though to assure himself of the reality of what was before his eyes—

“SHIPWRECK OF THE ‘HEART OF MADRAS.’

“The recent storm was the cause of a very sad disaster. The ‘Heart of Madras,’ a richly freighted East Indian vessel, the property of Sir Robert Elliot, who, with all the wealth he had acquired by honorable labor in distant lands, was returning on board of her to Europe, having escaped all the perils of the deep, was wrecked in sight of the harbor. Nothing was saved but a part of the crew, together with the unfortunate owner of the ship. The man who left the shores of Asia in the possession of millions, lands in his native country destitute, for neither ship nor cargo was insured. Such are the caprices of fortune.

“Ralph’s reading of this startling paragraph was interrupted by various ejaculations of disappointment and poignant regret; and at the close of it he threw down the journal with an oath, and went out of the office, to which he

did not return for some hours. When he did, his ill-humor was still visible. He slammed doors and drawers, scowled and cursed because the room was too warm; because his pen was bad, because a lock was rusty; at every turn he betrayed the demon of selfish spite which had taken possession of him.

“Nor was it any better the next morning, when he sat down to his account books, which seemed to have no more soothing qualities than any other of his surroundings; for he raised his head with a scowl of anger, on hearing, after about half an hour, a slow and heavy tread ascending the stairs. The step was accompanied by a constant coughing and panting, and interrupted every few moments by pauses, as if the visitor was exhausted, and obliged to rest and take breath. Nearer and nearer the steps approached; there was a knock, and Ralph growled out—

“‘Come in.’”

“An old man entered; a meagre, stooping figure, his head bowed, thinly covered with iron-gray hair, his limbs trembling, his clothing poor. He leaned on a stout walking-stick. His face was deeply furrowed; his complexion, browned by tropical suns, formed a striking contrast with the heavy white eye-brows that hung above his deep-set eyes, which shone with a brightness still youthful and fiery. I was really terrified at the sharp, penetrating glance which he cast for an instant upon Ralph. As he did so, he was attacked by a paroxysm of coughing, which lasted for almost a minute, and did not allow him to speak. So hollow and painful was the sound that I involuntarily thought—

“Poor old man! you will not have to bear the burden of your existence very long; you appear already to have one foot in the grave. The cough at last ceased, and the old man leaned trembling upon his staff, and raised his

eyes to Ralph, who sat looking at this unusual apparition with surprise and curiosity. Directly, without even offering the old man a chair, he asked him roughly, what he wanted—

“‘With such a cough as that,’ he added, ‘you had better stay at home in your bed, than to go out to torment people with your raven’s croak. Come, what do you want? Be brief, I have no time to lose.’

“‘Are you Ralph Elliot, the advocate?’ inquired the old man.

“‘Certainly I am! You ought to know who I am, since you have come to me.’

“‘It is likely that there is more than one Ralph Elliot in London, and for that reason I am particular to inquire,’ replied the old man, quietly. ‘You are then that Ralph Elliot who was brought up in his uncle’s house?’

“‘Well, and what then? Come to the point, old man!’ exclaimed Ralph, with growing impatience.

“ ‘Well, then,’ returned the other, ‘embrace me, my nephew—I am your uncle, Robert Elliot, from India!’

“ ‘Are you, indeed!’ was Ralph’s short and chilling rejoinder.

“ ‘Yes, I am your lonely old uncle. I suppose you have seen the account of the storm, and the consequences, in the daily papers? I have come to London, full of trembling anxiety, to find my brothers; alas, I hear they are both dead! Imagine how severe a blow that was for a poor old man! But then I heard that my nephew, Ralph Elliot, still lived, and in comfortable circumstances. That gave me fresh hope; I breathed more freely. I have searched for you, although it is difficult and painful to me to walk in your streets—at last I have found you, and I am so much rejoiced! In you, I trust my declining years may find solace; for the sake of him, who was dear to both of us, my departed brother and your more than

father, you will love and assist your old uncle !'

" 'Enough of sentiment, uncle ; if my uncle you really are. You must see that it is folly to approach me thus. Every one must look out for himself, and there is not much to spare for poor relations.'

"The old gentleman smiled faintly at these words, and appeared for an instant as if he would return some angry and reproachful answer ; but a fresh attack of coughing suddenly coming on, he was so fearfully convulsed that it was some minutes before he spoke again.

" 'That is true—very true,' he said at last. 'I see plainly, my dear young man, that I cannot reside with you ; you have not room or means, perhaps ; but still you will assist me in some way, will you not, nephew ? Some small means of subsistence you will surely not refuse me ! I am old, my limbs are feeble ; you hear my cough—I surely cannot have many years

of life remaining. For my short time, you will not leave me in misery and want; you will not suffer me, in my old days, to beg from door to door for my bread! Oh, such a fate as this, Ralph, your kindness will surely avert from me!

“‘Pshaw!’ exclaimed Ralph, his ill-humor momentarily increasing, ‘a man would have his hands full, if he were to undertake the care of every old beggar that comes along. Go, old man, leave me in peace! Who knows whether you are really old Elliot, after all? You may be some cunning impostor, thinking to work upon my sympathies! You have made a mistake in your reckoning!’

“‘A mistake, indeed!’ repeated the old man, with some sadness. ‘Well, well, one must learn to endure all things. I will see, then, whether I can find more pitiful hearts among my other relations. I have heard that my brother William left three children; tell me, Ralph, where I may find them.’

“‘How do I know into what hole they may have crept?’ replied Ralph, disdainfully. ‘It will be useless for you, in any case, to hunt them up, for their father did not leave them a penny. You needn’t waste your time in looking for them; there is nothing to be had from them.’

“‘I may at least find sympathizing hearts. I beg of you, Ralph, tell me where the children live!’

“‘I tell you, I do not know. No more questions, now!’

“‘What! you do not know where the children of him who, I learn, was your benefactor, are to be found? That is too much!’ said the uncle. ‘You have known that they were poor, and have never troubled yourself even to inquire about them?’

“‘On the contrary, I have turned them out of my doors, as I will you, if you do not take yourself off!’ almost shouted Ralph.

“‘I am going, nephew, I am going,’ replied the old man, in a gentle tone, which, however, contrasted strangely with those sharp and contemptuous furtive glances which he occasionally cast upon his nephew. ‘I will leave you, my dear Ralph, and I promise you never to return, if my visits are so annoying to you. But surely, you will do something for your father’s poor old brother! I see thousands lying there—you are rich, Ralph! you will not let me go quite penniless from you?’

“‘Promise me, first, never to come again,’ said Ralph, hastily; ‘then, perhaps, I might—’

“‘Certainly, certainly, I promise!’ the old man assured him.

“‘Well, then, take that and go!’ said Ralph, snatching from a package a bank-note, which he threw contemptuously towards his uncle.

“It chanced to be myself. I fell at the old man’s feet. I pitied him in my inmost spirit. He took me up, and, as he did so with his

trembling hand, such a fiery look shot from his eyes that I wondered it did not burn me. He did, indeed, make a motion as if he would tear me; but another thought occurred to him, as I saw by the singularly derisive smile that flitted across his lips.

“‘So, this is all that you will do for the old and feeble brother of your father; you, who are rich, or at least comfortably off?’ he asked.

“‘I should think it was enough,’ replied Ralph, harshly. ‘You are saucy, my good uncle. I have no patience with such impertunity.’

“‘Very well—very well! I am even with you,’ said the old man, now in a clear, strong voice, drawing himself to his full height, and casting such a look upon his miserable nephew that the latter, hardened as he was, hung his head before the gray-headed beggar.

“‘Well—very well! I will keep this note carefully, very carefully, as a treasured me-

mento, to the end of my days, of my loving, beneficent, tender-hearted nephew! Shameless young man! disgrace of your family!' he continued, in tones of indignation and grief; 'ungrateful to your benefactor and to his children, pitiless towards a helpless and feeble old man, to whom you would have extended both hands in eager welcome, if but a single spark of true Christian love had warmed your stony heart. Know that I, your uncle, am no beggar! My ship was *not* wrecked, my wealth *not* lost; it was *not* the "Heart of Madras," but the "Heart of Calcutta," that went down. But the rumor having been spread, and the story so industriously worked up by the journalists into a touching incident of destitution, I determined to avail myself of it, in order to try your heart, and see whether you were a true man—that is, a true Christian or not! I know you now, miserable being, and,' he added with sarcastic expression, 'I am ready, solemnly, to repeat

my promise, never more to cross your threshold!

“Never, in the course of my existence, have I seen a man stand in such utter confusion as Ralph. His color changed from red to white, from white to red; he made a fruitless attempt to be reconciled with his uncle, kneeling in the very dust before him, but the old gentleman turned his back upon him, saying—

“‘Pitiful wretch! it is my money to which you are kneeling, not to me!’ and left the room and hastened out of the house.

“Thus I came into the hands of Sir Robert Elliot; and I might relate many things concerning him, if our third sister were not better qualified for that than myself. It is your turn now, sister!”

“To-morrow, to-morrow,” replied the third-bank-note. “The night is now almost gone, and we might be interrupted. Wait, sisters, until to-morrow.”

“Be it so,” replied the other, as she slipped from the leaves of the golden arabesque into the casket, whose crystal lid closed mysteriously over them. Deep silence reigned once more in the apartment, until the morning dawn peeped in through the windows, and the housemaid came as usual, to begin her daily tasks.





CHAPTER III.

“The Lord preserveth the strangers; He relieveth the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.”—Ps. cxlvi. 9.

“IT is a wonderful fate, sisters.” A bank-note, a heathen, or an infidel, that which has no soul, or he who believes in none, may speak of *fate*; to a Christian soul, happy in the love of the dear Lord, there is no such thing as fate, but a consoling and controlling Providence. “It is a wonderful fate that has brought us together here: a rare occurrence of circumstances has borne us from very different places into the same hands; and those circumstances correspond so curiously with each other as to form an unbroken chain, each

of us being able to supply those particulars with which the others are unacquainted. For my history, as well as yours, is connected with that of the orphans and of Sir Robert Elliot."

These words were spoken at the stroke of midnight on the third night, the moon again casting her delicate and beautiful light on the three shadowy little figures that were once more seated on the arabesque ornaments of the casket.

"I will pass over the history of my earliest days," continued the third bank-note. "Passing from one hand to another, I came at last into the possession of an immensely wealthy banker, and was sent by him to Sir Robert, whom I found in a magnificent house, furnished with the greatest luxury. I was full of amazement, as I came into the apartment where the old gentleman sat. I wondered, too, at finding that we bank-notes were not handled with the same careful regard as in most other places ;

such an utter want of consideration I had never experienced in my life. When Sir Robert received us from the banker's messenger, he threw us carelessly upon the nearest table—so carelessly that we fell scattered like worthless bits of paper; at the same time he gave a handful of us to the messenger, who was all smiles and thanks at the rich gift, and expressed his gratitude so profusely that the old gentleman cut him short. The man having bowed himself out of the door, Sir Robert called to an old black-visaged, gray-haired servant who was waiting on him.

“‘Pompey, put this money away.’

“The black man, almost as careless as his master, gathered us up and thrust us into an open drawer, closing it so heedlessly that a corner of me was left sticking out; so I was able to take a minute survey of the room. Such luxury I had not beheld, even at the house of my former owner, the banker. Here all the

furniture was made of costly wood, and much of it inlaid and ornamented with gold; a most luxurious carpet was on the floor, and boxes, partially unpacked, displayed a profusion of splendid Indian fabrics, shawls, gold-embroidered kerchiefs, muslins, velvets, silks; there were also precious stones of various kinds in caskets—in short, whichever way I turned my curious gaze, I beheld evidences of untold wealth.

“But the figure of the apparent owner of all this magnificence seemed to me more remarkable than his surroundings. Half sitting, half reclining in a luxurious easy-chair, he appeared out of humor, sad and discontented. His rich clothing was of foreign pattern. A bright, many-colored turban covered his gray locks; soft, warm shawls were wrapped around his limbs; his feet were buried in mats of the finest velvet carpeting; on his fingers, rings set with diamonds and rubies glittered as he held the

long Turkish pipe, from which every few moments he blew clouds of fragrant smoke. But amid all this, he wore a sad countenance, and his melancholy eyes gazed, half open, upon vacancy, with a listless, weary expression.

“His servant, whom he addressed by the name of Pompey, was not a less remarkable-looking person. He was cowering down by the chimney-place, where a fire was blazing brightly upon the hearth, gazing upon the flames as they quivered and danced upward like long fiery tongues. Pompey wore long white garments, which contrasted sharply with his swart countenance. He seemed absorbed in watching the fire, which cast a bronze hue over his dark complexion; but I soon observed that he often cast furtive looks at his master from under his heavy eyebrows, and then shook his head with a look of anxiety. Thus sat these two for some hours, silent and gloomy, until at last the master spoke—

“ ‘How foolish we have been, Pompey!’

“ ‘And why, master?’

“ ‘Foolish, indeed, terribly foolish—a thousand times foolish!’

“ ‘But how have we been foolish?’

“ ‘Because we did not stay in India, Pompey; that is why!’

“ ‘Indeed, I would rather be there,’ replied Pompey. ‘But it was your own will, master—Pompey had to obey!’

“ ‘That is to say, that all the folly is my own?’ said the old gentleman.

“ ‘I did not say so, master. But why complain now? What is done, is done!’

“ ‘Then, old night-owl!’ exclaimed his master, half angry, half amused at his servant’s cool philosophy. ‘If thou hadst not served me so faithfully for thirty long years, I could beat thee!’

“ ‘You might kill me, master, and of what use would it be? You would only be worse

off than before,' replied the black, as coolly as before.

"‘True, true, Pompey! Oh, what a miserable life, this of Europe! No light, no warmth, no sunshine! Only clouds, rain, snow, and smoke! Oh, what folly, Pompey! We ought to have stayed out there, and never seen England again!’

"‘But now that you are here, master, I suppose you must stay,’ observed Pompey, with imperturbable equanimity. ‘You are rich, you might spend thousands in pleasures and amusements. Send for players, and let them perform something before you.’

"‘Pshaw!’ answered the old man, with a look of disgust.

"‘Have singers, then, to sing delightful songs to you.’

"‘I cannot abide their trilling and quavering!’

"‘Well, dancers, then!’

“‘Worse and worse, Pompey!’

“‘Well, then, go out among men; hear and see, and talk with them. A rich nabob is welcome everywhere!’

“‘I could not endure it. All men are knaves and idolaters—gold is their god. I have seen enough of them!’

“‘Then Pompey must go,’ said the servant. ‘If all men are knaves, then Pompey must be a knave; for he is a man, if he *is* black.’

“‘Now, you silly old fellow!’ exclaimed Sir Robert, impatiently, ‘you know very well that I do not mean you when I speak of the common order of men. Don’t be so foolish, Pompey—sit still! Oh, your master is very unfortunate!’

“‘Very foolish he is!’ answered Pompey, ‘Not Pompey is foolish, but Sir Robert Elliot!’

“‘And why, Pompey? How am I foolish!’ now inquired Sir Robert, in his turn, and not in the least offended at the boldness of his old

servitor, who spoke to him almost as he might to one of his own degree. 'Tell me, Pompey; I want to hear! Why am I foolish?'

"'Good! Pompey *will* speak!' said the black man, turning around so as to face his master. 'First, why did Sir Robert come to England? Because he wanted to see his home and his relations! Good! Pompey said, "Stay here, master! India is your home, and a better one than any other. You can send for your relations to come here; you have gold and diamonds enough!" No, Sir Robert would not. All sold, goods and money packed up, he takes ship, sails for weeks, endures storms and fatigues—home at last! Well, what does Sir Robert do? The banker has bought and furnished his house for him, and here he comes with all his goods—and what now? See his native country? Go out? See or hear anything? Find any pleasure in his home? Oh, no; Sir Robert will sit and smoke, and torment himself. Now,

is he foolish, or not? And, besides, in India, he had no peace, on account of worrying about his relations in England. Well, we are in London; will we look for relations? No! Now, who is the foolish man? Pompey? Pompey would have stayed in India! Well, then, it must be Sir Robert! So says Pompey.'

"I thought Sir Robert would have sprung out of his chair in a rage, and beaten Pompey, or at least put him out of the room; but nothing of the kind happened. Sir Robert was very quiet, and, in a very calm tone, replied—

"'Thou art right. Pompey, thy master *is* foolish! But, Pompey, he is unhappy, too. See, Pompey, I have wealth, great wealth, but of what use is it to me? My money does not make me happy, nor does anything that I can purchase with it. Can I buy a loving and faithful heart with all the gold in the world? No, Pompey! Ah, if I could but be sure that my

relatives would love me sincerely ; but how can I tell that ? I am rich—they may, perhaps, love my wealth, and not me ! How *shall* I know whether they are true-hearted or not ? I am old and wrinkled, irritable and capricious—they cannot love me, but they may flatter me, and play the hypocrite with me, for my money's sake ! Human hearts are so deceitful, Pompey ! Oh, for any one who would love me truly and kindly I could do anything ! But I am very unfortunate, Pompey ; no one can love me !

“ ‘And Pompey, master—does your old servant follow you for gold ?’ inquired the black, with tears in his eyes.

“ ‘No, no, no, Pompey ! you are a good, honest soul !’ replied his master, soothingly. ‘But, Pompey, we are a pair of old dullards ; the one of us always more tiresome than the other. We must have youth, life, cheerfulness, and above all, *love* around us ; and money will

not help us to that! Give me the newspapers, Pompey!

“And Pompey handed his master several papers that lay on a table, but which the old gentleman, lost in his painful reflections, had until now neglected. Then there was silence in the room, and I lay thinking over things that were quite new and strange to me, and which a bank-note would never have dreamed of, if she had not seen them before her, as I did. We are generally treated with so much respect and consideration, as my sister has before remarked, that we naturally learn to think ourselves the most important beings in the world; we know that we give people the fine houses and clothing, and the indulgences that they seem to prize most; yes, people even say a man is ‘*worth so many thousands*,’ as if a man’s value depended on how many of us he might possess; how can we help thinking ourselves of the first consequence? Yet here I

heard that there were things, without which magnificence was only a weariness to its owner, things of more value than all the splendor around me, which all of our family in the world could not buy! It was a bewildering mystery to a poor bank-note. I lay for some time pondering these things, until the silence was again broken by Sir Robert—

“‘Listen to this, Pompey,’ he said, and read aloud the very same paragraph from the newspaper, that, according to our sister’s story, caused Ralph Elliot’s base treatment of Sir Robert, and the defeat of his plans. ‘Why, how is this? And here it is in another journal,’ he said, on opening a second. ‘O, I understand; you remember that the disaster was the wreck of the “Heart of Calcutta,” which took place the night after we landed. There has been a mistake in the name of the vessel, and some one who knew me has made up this paragraph.’

“‘And now, master, now! Pompey cannot buy you love, it is true; but he can tell you how to find out the truth, whether love is there or not!’ exclaimed the old servant, his eyes brightening.

“‘How, Pompey, how? Speak, my good fellow!’

“‘Easily, easily, master! Go and see them as a poor man—put on a beggar’s dress; go in that way to your brothers, and nephews, and nieces; then you will see what they will say and do.’

“‘But perhaps they have not seen this report, or perhaps they know the truth?’

“‘They cannot know, or they would have come before this to see you.’

“Sir Robert reflected for a few moments.

“‘At least, it is worth trying, Pompey,’ he at last spoke, rising at the same instant, as if to put the plan into immediate execution, as he was evidently a man with whom to purpose

was to do. Another thought instantly occurred to him, however, and he paused.

“‘But who knows,’ he said, ‘whether a single one of my relations has read this story? Who knows even whether my brothers are still living? It is years since I heard from either of them. Go you first, Pompey; inquire of the police, of my bankers, of any one you can, whether any of the family are living; in what circumstances, what sort of persons they are—everything, in short, that you can find out, and bring me word. I must know all about them before I am a day older.’

“‘Good, master!’ answered Pompey, showing his white teeth for delight. ‘Now Pompey glad—master will learn some news; will know what to do at last.’

“The old black went out, and did not return until towards evening. He was then tired, dejected, and visibly out of humor.

“‘Well, how is it?’ inquired his master, as

soon as he saw him. 'Have you found out where my brothers live?'

" 'I know all, master.'

" 'Well, well, why don't you speak? How is Edward?'

" 'Dead! died in poverty! He has left only one son, named Ralph.'

" 'Dead! And now I shall not see him—never in this world!' sighed Sir Robert. 'And my brother John?'

" 'Dead, too!' answered Pompey. 'And he was poor, like the other! He left nothing but three children.'

" 'Is he dead, too? And died in poverty! Oh, it is hard!' cried old Sir Robert, with more feeling than I had supposed him capable of. 'Pompey, it is a pity we did not come home sooner. Perhaps we might have been able to help or save! Oh, how I reproach myself now! And it is *too late*!'

“‘Useless, master! there is no medicine against death!’

“‘But against poverty! God knows I would gladly have shared my superfluity with my poor brothers! But the children, Pompey, how is it with them? Ralph, you say, is the name of Edward’s son.’

“‘Ralph.’

“‘Well, why don’t you go on! Must I question you all night, or have you made no further inquiries?’

“‘I have. Mr. Ralph, it is said, is well off.’

“‘And his disposition? What kind of a man is he?’

“‘Not good, they say, master!’ replied Pompey, shrugging his shoulders. ‘Heard no good of him. Hard, miserly, ungrateful to his uncle, Mr. John, who brought him up like his own son—so people say.’

“‘People do not always speak the truth; we

must find out for ourselves. Do you know where he lives.'

" 'Yes, master.'

" 'Well—to-morrow! And now, about the others; how is it with them?'

" 'Bad—I know nothing of them.'

" 'How, you know nothing?'

" 'Nothing; they disappeared with their mother, when their father died, no one knows where.'

" 'That is bad, indeed, Pompey. But we must have patience, and seek them. He who seeks, finds. Perhaps Ralph can tell me; he *must* know, at least, where the children of his benefactor live. Enough, Pompey, to-morrow I will go and inquire, and see and hear for myself. Get me a suit of old clothes—I will visit Ralph; and will soon find out the truth about him. Report often lies, I know; and perhaps, after all, my nephew is not as bad as he is represented.'

“On the next morning, accordingly, the disguise was ready, and the old gentleman having put it on, informed himself exactly as to Ralph’s address, and went out. He stayed a long while, and when at length he returned, his sharp eyes were glowing with scorn, and he threw himself into an arm-chair, evidently in great perturbation. Pompey shrugged his shoulders; he appeared to have foreseen the result of the experiment. Sir Robert sat silent for a long time, lost in thought, now and then biting his lips and frowning.

“‘Well?’ asked Pompey, at last.

“‘What do you mean by “Well?”’ cried Sir Robert, impatiently.

“‘I mean, how was it, master?’

“‘Bad, Pompey; altogether bad—terribly bad! This time rumor spoke the truth. Worthless fellow! Here, Pompey, take this bank-note, and put it away carefully; I shall keep

it all my life to remind me of my nephew's affection.'

"The old gentleman then related to his faithful servant all that we have heard so fully, sister, from you; only adding such remarks upon Ralph's character and conduct as that gentleman would not have been pleased to hear. Sir Robert was entirely estranged from his nephew, and exceedingly indignant at his heartlessness. Pompey listened silently until his master had exhausted the full measure of his wrath. At length, when he stopped speaking, the black inquired—

" 'What next, master? Ship to India?'

" 'Ship to India, blockhead!' sputtered the testy old gentleman. 'Do you forget that there are others for me to find? Can you suppose I would leave England without so much as inquiring after them? They are needy; perhaps they would be glad of my help—perhaps, Pompey, they would even receive a *poor*

uncle with kindness! No, we will stay; we will hunt for them. We will not rest until we find them!

“‘Very good, master!’ answered the black, though not quite cheerfully. ‘We shall have to stay a long while. London is large.’

“‘And if I stay all my life,’ cried Sir Robert, ‘I will not be a villain like Ralph, who will leave his nearest relations to perish, for want of the aid he might so easily afford! We have time, Pompey; we will seek them, and there’s an end of it.’

“Poor old Pompey could scarcely have been much delighted with this decision. He was longing for far-off India, where the sun shone bright and warm, where the sky was ever blue, and the breeze was gentle; he was shivering in the chilly atmosphere of England, whose almost constant clouds and mists veiled the beauty of the heavens. Yet he was so truly attached to his master that he showed no ill-humor, but

patiently accompanied him in his daily wanderings through the city, and aided in the almost hopeless task of finding the poor orphans of John Elliot.

“For a long time the search was entirely unsuccessful, although Sir Robert availed himself of the assistance of the police, and took every other means he could devise to find the children. The old gentleman not unfrequently bewailed aloud his ill success; but Pompey comforted and encouraged him, and exhorted him to patience and perseverance; then the search would recommence with renewed energy.

“One day, when the pair set out, as usual, upon their walk, Sir Robert put a handful of notes carelessly into his pocket, partly for the purpose of making purchases, and also that he might be provided in case he should wish to give alms. This time I chanced to be among the number, and I lay so loosely in his pocket as partly to hang out; I might easily have

gained my freedom, if I had desired it. But I felt so great an interest in Sir Robert, and in his anxious search for his brother's children, that I had no desire to leave him. I lay, therefore, quite still, and contented myself with peeping out into the world, and observing what was going on around me.

“We wandered through many streets, listened here and there, stood still sometimes, and sometimes entered houses, where Sir Robert supposed poor widows and orphans to live; but nowhere found the objects of our search. There was no lack of poor people to whom Pompey, who carried his master's pocket-book, distributed alms according to the judgment of the latter.

“‘It is of no use—none at all!’ exclaimed Sir Robert, despairingly, as they came out of one of those abodes of want; ‘we only weary ourselves, without finding even a trace of them!’

“‘All true, master!’ replied Pompey. ‘But then, they are poor! If they were wealthy, or even comfortable, like Mr. Ralph, I would say with joy, home to India, master! But if they are suffering—oh, let us stay!’ pleaded the honest, kind-hearted old black.

“‘Yes, yes, Pompey!’ sighed Sir Robert, feeling for his India silk-handkerchief, to wipe the drops of perspiration from his forehead; for the long walk, and the exertion of going up and down a flight of steep stairs, had been almost too much for him. ‘Yes, we must stay! For even if they should be as bad as Ralph, which I cannot believe, still they must be saved from absolute want. They are my brother’s children; and he, as every one says, was a good man.’

“With these words, Sir Robert put his handkerchief again into his pocket, but without paying the slightest attention to us bank-notes, and I received an unlucky pull, which, without

his knowing it, brought me quite out of his pocket; I fluttered down to the sidewalk, which, happily for me, was for a wonder entirely dry. I was not a little frightened, and rustled as loudly as I could, to call the attention of my heedless owner, from whom, as I have said, I was quite unwilling to be separated. But Sir Robert and Pompey went on, and I lay at the mercy of chance; the first passing breeze might take me up and carry me, who knows where? But I was not destined to lie there very long. A slender, handsome youth, with a pale countenance, but with clear, honest-looking eyes, saw me—and saw, too, that I had fallen from Sir Robert's pocket. He picked me up quickly, and, instead of putting me into his own pocket, as I expected he would do, he held me in his hand, ran after Sir Robert, and, taking off his cap respectfully, said to him—

“‘Here, sir! this fell out of your pocket.’

“Sir Robert looked surprised. With an

observant eye he looked at the boy's clothing, which was very, very poor and threadbare, but scrupulously clean, and then shook his head with wonder and admiration. Pompey also regarded the youth with so curious a gaze, that he stood before the two men in some embarrassment—

“‘Take it, sir, it is yours,’ he repeated. ‘It fell from your pocket when you put in your handkerchief. I saw it fall, and picked it up.’

“‘Psha!’ said Sir Robert at last, ‘I know nothing about it.’

“‘But I know, sir,’ persisted the young man. ‘I assure you I saw it fall; I never tell a falsehood, sir.’

“‘I can very well believe you are not telling me one,’ replied Sir Robert; ‘neither do you look like a liar, young man. You seem to be a child of honest parents, and to be an honorable fellow yourself! Keep the bank-note; I

do not need it at all, and perhaps you may. An honest youth, is he not, Pompey?’

“‘Yes, indeed! Good face!’ replied the servant, with an almost affectionate look at the boy. ‘Give him the note!’

“‘But I do not wish you to give it to me, sir!’ exclaimed the boy. ‘I am, as you say, the child of honorable parents; and I do not beg my bread; I earn it.’

“‘Still, you are poor, young man, you are poor!’ said Sir Robert.

“‘Certainly I am; but poverty is no disgrace, if one works, and is honest and faithful.’

“‘No, no, it is no disgrace, my dear boy, none at all!’ said Sir Robert. ‘You do not beg, I know; still I may make you a present of the note—keep it, I beseech you! But stop—no! Give me the note, it is worth taking care of; is it not, Pompey?’

“‘Yes, master!’ replied the latter; and while Sir Robert received me from the boy’s hand,

and was whispering some words to his servant, the youth had hurried away.

“ ‘Where is he?’ cried Sir Robert, turning around. ‘Pompey, you old blockhead, have you let him go? Oh, there he is, I see him! After him, quick! Pompey; we must not let him slip through our fingers; I have something good in my mind for him. Make haste, Pompey!’

“The boy was easily distinguished by his cap, and not only Pompey but Sir Robert himself ran after him with redoubled speed. The old gentleman, however, was soon exhausted; he panted for breath, and great drops streamed from his forehead. Pompey observed it.

“ ‘Do not hurry so fast, master!’ he said, still going on, and keeping the youth in sight. ‘Stay behind, and leave me to follow the young man. I am not tired; I promise, I will not let him escape me. But you, master, go home! Pompey will bring you news of the good boy!’

“‘Well, well, you are right; I can go no further,’ Sir Robert gasped out, with difficulty. ‘Follow him, Pompey, see where he lives, do anything you can for him. Be quick!’

“The old gentleman stopped, and stood looking after his trusty servant, until after some seconds the black disappeared amid the crowds that filled the street.

“‘Success to him!’ murmured Sir Robert. ‘I shall be very sorry if he loses sight of the boy. What a fine-looking young fellow! And so honorable with all his poverty! He would not beg, nor even take the note as a gift; and then off like a feather on the wind! Splendid boy! I am delighted with him. I must see him again, and become better acquainted with him. Perhaps he might learn to love me, if he should find that I mean him only kindness. He would be a treasure to me; and to Pompey, too! I saw how the old fellow’s eyes glistened with pleasure at the sight of the boy’s

honesty and fine manners. And that bank-note—I will keep it in memory of what has happened to-day! Oh, he has pleased me too well, that boy! I will keep the note, indeed, and lay it with Ralph's, that the recollection of this brave boy may console me for the heartlessness of my miserable nephew.'

"And, as carefully as if I had been an inestimable treasure, he laid me in his pocket-book. Then I heard him call a coach to take him home, as he was much fatigued. We rolled swiftly through the streets, and having at last arrived at Sir Robert's house, he took me from his pocket and laid me in this casket, where I found you, sister. We did not then expect that a third would so soon be added to our number.

"I was very much pleased to know that I should remain always in the possession of Sir Robert Elliot, whom I had learned to like so well. I was also quite satisfied with the place

assigned us, since, through the open arabesque of our casket, everything that goes on around us could be seen and heard. I awaited then the return of Pompey, and his report concerning the young man we had met in the street, with an interest scarcely less than that of Sir Robert himself, whose anxious impatience was quite evident.

“At last, after some hours, Pompey returned. His homely old black countenance shone with delight, his eyes rolled, his broad mouth was laughing from ear to ear, showing all his white pearly teeth.

“‘Well, what news?’ exclaimed Sir Robert, darting like a bird of prey upon the black. ‘Did you follow the boy? Where did you come up with him? Speak quickly!’

“‘Ha, ha, ha!’ laughed Pompey, with wide open mouth.

“‘Ha, ha, ha—you old blockhead!’ mimicked Sir Robert. ‘What of the boy? What is his

name, and where does he live? Will you speak?’

“‘Ha, ha, ha!’ laughed Pompey again. ‘A good story; a fine joke, master!’

“‘But tell me, then, what you mean, will you?’ cried Sir Robert, stamping impatiently. ‘What have you discovered about him?’

“More than you think, perhaps, master,’ replied Pompey, triumphantly; and, half in excitement, half amusing himself with his master’s impatience, privileged old servant as he was, he began to laugh again. Sir Robert was now really angry, and rose with a threatening gesture, which brought the old black to his senses. Pompey stepped back a pace or two, begging pardon.

“‘Patience, master, patience!’ he said, making an effort to restrain the laugh that would come in spite of him. ‘Pompey in earnest now. Listen, master, Pompey will tell! I ran after the boy as fast I could, but he was so quick

that I should have lost sight of him after all if he had not stopped at a picture store, which he entered. I looked through the window, and saw him take a package of pretty little pictures from his pocket, which he offered to the dealer for sale. But, whether the young man asked too much for them, or the dealer did not need them, he hastily folded them up again, and putting them in his pocket, came out of the store looking troubled, and went away again, almost too fast for me to follow. Just then I saw a hackney-coach; so I jumped in, pointed out the youth to the coachman, and promised him three times his fare if he would keep him in sight.'

" 'Right, Pompey; that was just the thing!' exclaimed Sir Robert. 'Well, then?'

" 'Yes, *then*!' Pompey continued; 'my coachman was a knowing man. He followed the young man, and watched him go into several other picture stores. Everywhere he offered

his little pictures, but it seemed he could not find any one to buy. I was so sorry for him I would have bought his pictures; but then he would have known that I was watching him, and would have slipped away, as he did at first. So I went on after him, until at last he sold the pictures for two little silver pieces, which he put in his pocket, and hurried off in another direction.'

"'Now, quick, keep your eyes open!' I called to the man. 'He must be going home, and I want to know where lives.'

"'The coachman had not forgotten my promise, and kept close on the boy's heels, following him from one street to another, till at last we reached a distant part of the city, where only very poor people live. The streets grew narrower, darker, dirtier; but the coachman still kept on, until at last the young man went into an unpleasant, smoky-looking old building.'

“‘Now stop!’ I called to the coachman. ‘Here is a guinea; now wait a little while until I come out.’

“‘I’ll wait till the end of next week,’ answered the fellow, who looked very much pleased with the gold piece. Then I went into the house after our young man.

“‘Well, there I was; but I did not know just what to do next. In which story should I find him? Downstairs or upstairs? I thought a minute, and then knocked at the nearest door. An elderly woman came out, and I asked her whether a young man lived in that house who painted pictures. At first the woman was frightened at my black face; but when I held a silver shilling up before it, it did not look so terrible, and she got over her fright very quickly.’

“‘Yes, yes, indeed,’ she answered. “All the way upstairs, three stories high—in the garret.’

“‘That was all I wanted to know just then, so I gave her the shilling, and went up. When I got to the top of the third flight of stairs, I found the door of the room not quite closed. I could hear the young man’s voice as he was speaking within; and this time, Sir Robert, I did listen a little to know what he said. It was not wrong—was it, master?’

“‘Silly old fellow!’ said Sir Robert. ‘Go on!’

“‘Well, then,’ Pompey went on. ‘I stepped on tiptoe closer, put my ear to the crack and listened. There were three voices; that of our young man, a child’s voice, and the voice of a young girl, whom the others called Helen. It was easy to understand that they were brother and sisters.’

“‘It is very little, Willy, for so much trouble,’ said the young girl, just as I put my ear to the door; meaning, I suppose, that he had not received enough for the pictures he had

sold. 'I am afraid you will lose all courage, Willy!'

"'No, Helen; oh, no, dear sister, I will not!' said our young man. 'I was sorry, it is true, that I could not bring you more than these two shillings; yet still that is something. And it will go still better when Mary is able to help me, as she promised.'

"'Of course it will,' said the child; 'I have been very diligent, Willy; and if you will have patience with me, I shall soon learn to do nicely.'

"'Bravo, Mary!' said our boy. 'We must both be diligent, so that our dear Helen may not have to sit late at night at her embroidery frame. Ah, Helen, it is too much for you! When I think how hard you have to work for every shilling you earn, I am almost sorry I did not accept that bank-note.'

"'What bank-note, Willy?' inquired Helen, in a tone of surprise.

“ ‘Oh, it fell out of an old gentleman’s pocket to the pavement, without his noticing it. I saw it and picked it up, and gave it to him. He would have given it to me; but it seemed to me too much like begging, and I refused it and hurried away. Perhaps it was foolish! The old gentleman looked so kind and friendly, and offered it to me, I am sure, out of pure goodwill.’

“ ‘How? What?’ interrupted Sir Robert. ‘What did the young fellow say about me?’

“ ‘Why, that you looked kind and friendly, master,’ replied Pompey, with a grin; ‘just like a true, good-hearted man! Does it please you so much that the youth should praise you?’

“ ‘And why should it not please me?’ answered Sir Robert. ‘Nobody praises me so often! Surely not you, you thankless old scamp! Well, go on! What more, Pompey? The poor children interest me.’

“‘I see they do, master! And Pompey, too! Well, the boy, whom they called Willy, praised you, as I have said, and thought perhaps he ought to have taken the bank-note; but his sister Helen, and even little Mary, did not agree with him. ‘No, no,’ I heard Helen say. ‘such a trifling service as that should be done without pay. You did right, Willy. I should have been ashamed if you had accepted the money. So long as we can work we will not beg.’

“‘Well, sister, so I thought,’ replied Willy. ‘And, besides, I had my pictures in my pocket, and hoped to get more for them than I did. If I had known how little I should receive, I cannot tell what I might have done.’

“‘No, no, Willy, no regrets!’ said Helen. ‘We are not in such need. Our winter provisions are laid in, and we still have a pound note in case of any emergency. Courage, dear brother! We are as careful and economical

as we know how to be; and, besides, we are poor orphans; and orphans, you know, have special promises from our Father in Heaven. "I will provide for the fatherless," He says; and we need never fear that we shall suffer want. He will take the place of both father and mother to us!

"Well, master," Pompey continued, "when I heard that these good, hard-working, pious children were orphans—poor, fatherless and motherless orphans, I felt so much for them that I could contain myself no longer. I should have liked to go into the room, and give them all the money in the pocket-book; but that they wouldn't have let me do; and, besides, it would have spoiled your pleasure. So, instead of going in, I came down stairs again to the woman I had seen before. I showed her another shilling, and asked her to tell me something about the children. Oh, master, I wish you could have been

there, and heard with your own ears what she said—

“‘Angels,’ she called them; ‘dear, good angels! Industrious, pious, charitable, and friendly. They are the same thing from morning until night, especially Helen. She takes such care of the others! When Willy was sick for some weeks, she sat day and night by his bedside, nursing and watching over him. Such good, faithful children could scarcely be found anywhere else in London.’

“‘And did you not inquire their family name, Pompey? I suppose you did not think of it, you old blockhead!’

“‘Pompey did think! Pompey knows all; only have patience!’ replied the servant. ‘What the woman said was not enough, and I put in a word or two here and there, as if I could not believe them to be quite so good. But she declared she had not praised them more than they deserved, and told me if I could not be-

lieve her, that I should go to Doctor Harper and he would tell me still more. Well, I did so, for I wanted to know all about the young people. And you should have heard the doctor! He could not find words enough to say all the good he thought of them—so faithful, so true, so upright, and good. He told me even more than the old woman had done, and I was satisfied and came home.'

" 'Very good, Pompey!' said Sir Robert, impatiently. 'But the name; what are the children called?'

" 'What they are called? Now guess, master!'

" 'You old blockhead! How should I guess the name of these strange children?' exclaimed Sir Robert, half vexed, half laughing. 'Tell me their name, instantly!'

" 'But, master, do you notice nothing at all, then?' cried Pompey, laughing again from his overflowing excitement and mirth.

‘How many children had your brother, Mr. John?’

“‘Three! But you do not mean— Pompey, you cannot mean, that—’

“‘That our good young man is your nephew, William Elliot?’ cried Pompey. ‘I do, I do, master! That is just the truth; and Miss Helen and Miss Mary are your nieces. And now you know all, master! Now you know why Pompey laughed so! Indeed, master, I could not help laughing for joy that Sir Robert had found his relations; that they are so good, and will be such a pleasure to him. Bless God! Hurrah!’

“‘And the trusty servant burst out laughing again, and, old as he was, almost danced for joy.

“‘Pompey, my dear Pompey, is this all true?’ cried Sir Robert, in delighted astonishment. ‘Speak! tell me again—is it true?’

“‘True, master, every word!’ answered Pom-

pey, laying his hand on his heart, and rolling his eyes, as if in solemn confirmation of his news. 'The youth of the bank-note is *our* young man, *our* nephew, and the two sweet sisters are *our* nieces! Isn't that plain enough, master? William, Helen, Mary Elliot—children of John Elliot. Do you understand it, master?'

" 'Not another word, Pompey. Call for the carriage!' ordered Sir Robert.

" 'And why?' asked the black.

" 'Because I must go out at once!'

" 'Where, master?'

" 'Where, master? To my poor, dear, orphan children, of course! Call the carriage, immediately!'

" 'No hurry, master,' replied Pompey. 'It is time enough to-morrow, and Pompey tired; too late for to-day,' he added, settling himself comfortably in the chimney-corner.

" 'I will go alone, then, you stiff-necked old

scamp!' cried Sir Robert, with his usual impatience.

" 'Well, master! but you cannot find them. To-morrow, master!' returned Pompey again, with the most imperturbable coolness.

"Sir Robert scolded for a few moments—the old servant listened patiently and respectfully, and then said—

" 'But, master, why not try the children, as well as Mr. Ralph? To-morrow put on poor clothes; go and hear, and see, for yourself? Why not, master? That was what you meant to do.'

" 'You're right, Pompey!' said his master, as quickly pacified as excited, and extending his hand to his faithful old servant. 'I had forgotten! Yes, I will test them first, and then decide. Who knows? perhaps, after all, they are worthless too!'

" 'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed Pompey.

" 'What is there to laugh at?' exclaimed Sir

Robert. 'If they are so poor as you think, they may well hesitate to receive a beggarly old uncle.'

"'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed the black again. 'Pompey knows better! They will divide their last shilling with the old uncle! Pompey knows.'

"'You old blockhead, with your laughing!' grumbled Sir Robert. 'Well, we shall see—we shall see!'

"'To-morrow, yes!' said Pompey. 'Good, all good! They would give their last shilling. Pompey knows. Ha, ha, ha!'

"On the next morning, having resumed his disguise, Sir Robert left the house, accompanied by Pompey. What happened while they were absent I do not know, for I could not leave the casket; only—"

"Stop!" here interrupted the first bank-note. "I can relate what followed, for I was present, and heard every word. On the morning, then,

of which you speak, my dear sister, the three orphans had been sitting at the table since sunrise, working industriously, when they heard footsteps outside their door, accompanied by Sir Robert's well-feigned cough. There was a knock; Helen cried—

“‘Come in!’ and the *old beggar* entered, just as you, dear sister, have already described him, looking sharply, yet with tenderness in his eyes, at the young people. They, on their part, regarded their extraordinary visitor with surprise. Even William failed to recognize the old gentleman in his present attire, though he had seen him but the day before.

“‘My children,’ said Sir Robert, ‘have you ever heard that your father had a brother living in the East Indies?’

“Helen gave instant attention, and her fine eyes sparkled with interest.

“‘Uncle Robert?’ she exclaimed. ‘Yes, yes,

sir! Our dear father has often talked to us of him. Don't you remember, Willy?

“‘Indeed I do!’ answered Willy. ‘Father was so sorry that uncle never let us hear from him. I have often heard him express pain that he knew so little of his brother. But, sir, have you any news for us from our uncle?’

“‘You must have seen him!’ said Helen. ‘Pray tell us!’

“‘Have you not read this, Miss Elliot?’ asked the old gentleman, handing her the newspaper, and pointing to the paragraph of which you, my sisters, have both spoken. Helen read it aloud, and exclaimed—

“‘Oh, my poor uncle! Willy, what can we do? We are ourselves so poor; and yet he is more unfortunate! He must count upon our assistance, such as it may be. We cannot leave him to his fate, unaided!’

“‘But what *can* we do, Helen?’ asked Willy.

‘He is so far from us—if he were only in London!’

“‘Well, if he were here, what would you do then?’ inquired Sir Robert.

“‘What a question, sir!’ exclaimed Helen. ‘We would share what we have, little as it is, with him. You smile, sir. Ask my brother—ask even little Mary; and, even though he should find us absolutely penniless, he might at least count on love and sympathy, and an earnest will to comfort him in his troubles.’

“‘Love? Sympathy? He might be sure of those, if he were still rich.’

“Helen turned away offended, and Willy exclaimed—

“‘For shame, sir! Is it kind to insult true and well-meaning hearts, that express to you their sincere feelings? It is an injury to my sister, and to all of us, sir!’

“‘You were really in earnest, then?’ said

Sir Robert. 'You would truly offer love and consolation to the old man in his trouble? But suppose you find him weak and sick, and embittered by misfortune?'

" 'So much the more would it be our duty to care for him. Do you not know, sir, that those who have felt the pressure of misfortune themselves, are best able to sympathize with others that suffer? Do not doubt us, sir. Take us to our uncle. Where is he?'

" 'Here, in London. Do you then really wish to visit the poor old man?' queried Sir Robert, his eyes brightening.

" 'Yes, yes, at once! And as he must be in need, we will take this money with us, Willy. We have a five-pound note here, we will share it with him. Then he must come and live with us—our small lodgings are still large enough to accommodate him too. We will give him our room; we will work twice as hard, and while we are busy, our uncle will tell us about the

distant countries he has seen, and about all his travels and adventures. It will be pleasant, Willy, don't you think so?

“‘Certainly, sister. Come, sir, let us go to him.’

“Sir Robert passed his hand over his eyes, and stood still.

“My children,’ he said at last, ‘consider well what you would do. I have fulfilled my commission, not to disappoint the wish of a distressed old man; but for you, who have nothing to depend on but your own labor, this would be too great a burden.’

“‘It is no matter, sir,’ replied Helen. ‘That is *our* care. Only let us hasten to him.’

“Sir Robert stood motionless, but his lips quivered, and deep and powerful emotions shone from his eyes.

“‘And this note,’ he said, in a half-choked voice, ‘this note—it is your last one, and you would share it with the old uncle, whom you

have never seen ; who has never even written to you ?’

“ ‘Yes, yes, certainly ! Why do you ask ?’ cried Willy, impatiently. ‘I beg of you, sir, no more delays : let us go.’

“ ‘Stay ! we do not need to go,’ exclaimed Sir Robert, extending his arms, while a tear trembled in his eye, and his frame shook with emotion. ‘Come to my heart, my dear children. I am your Uncle Robert !’

“For an instant the children stood in astonishment ; then, with one accord, they threw themselves into the old man’s arms. Helen wept ; William and Mary rejoiced aloud, and all welcomed their uncle with lively and heartfelt joy.

“ ‘My dear, dear children, is it thus you would welcome your poor old uncle ?’ he cried. ‘Oh, Lord, I thank Thee, that Thou hast suffered me to find these loving hearts ! Helen, dear, kind Helen, will you really share your last note with me ?’

“‘Indeed I will, dear uncle, with pleasure! Must we not share all things henceforth?’

“Before Sir Robert could answer, a half-repressed sob was heard without—all paused to listen. A ray of pleasure flitted over Sir Robert’s countenance.

“‘Pompey, my old Pompey! the faithful creature!’ he exclaimed. ‘He has heard all. Come in, old fellow! See what a treasure I have found. Come in, you black fellow, with a white heart and a golden spirit; come in, and rejoice with your master, who is almost out of his head with happiness.’

“And he drew the black in through the open door, weeping and sobbing like a child, and seeming ready to fall at the feet of the young people.

“‘Old Pompey too happy!’ he cried, with broken voice. ‘Sir Robert happy, Pompey happy—all happy! Now stay here, and not go back to India. Oh, master, all so good!’

“Helen, William and Mary, looked on in fresh amazement, utterly unable to comprehend this new demonstration. Some recollection seemed to be awakened in Willy’s mind of the day before, of the old gentleman and his black companion. Then the boy shook his head. That person must have been a rich man, and his newly found uncle was apparently very poor.

“‘Pompey,’ Sir Robert was saying, ‘did you hear? They will share all they have with us, even this last five-pound note, Pompey!’

“‘I heard, master. *We* share—all.’

“‘Yes, all,’ cried Sir Robert, with that bright look of his. ‘All, all, all, except this bank-note! This remains mine—it is my own; and I will not part with it for all the treasures of Peru. Good things come in *threes*, Pompey; we have *two* already put away at home—this makes the *third*. They shall be laid up in gold, and preserved to the end of my life. And you,

children—*my* children, what astonishes you so much? I see you wonder at my words; don't you understand? Don't you see that the newspaper report was all a mistake, and that I have only used it to try you, and see whether you could love and receive your unknown uncle for duty's sake—for Christ's sake, even as one of His poor? Now, see this!' and he pulled from his pocket notes and silver and gold, and threw them on the table so rashly in his excitement, that they fell in every direction. 'See, children, it was all a mistake! My ships did not go down, and I still have riches, thank God, to make you all comfortable; but the richest thing He has given me is your pious, tender young hearts. All I have is yours, my children—we *will* share all; only come and live with me, and be mine!'

"Helen wept again, Willy's face was radiant, Mary rejoiced, Pompey laughed and sobbed at once, and Sir Robert pressed them all by turns

to his heart, not excepting his trusty old servant. In a short time, however, they all became calmly happy, in the assurance that they had found all that each one needed, and that a new life of loving activity was about to commence for all.

“The rest you know as well as I, dear sisters,” said the bank-note, in conclusion. “All came together to Sir Robert’s beautiful mansion. I was placed here with you in our golden, crystal casket, and every day since, we have had the pleasure of watching the happiness and content of this family, so worthy of all they enjoy. We rejoice in the sight; we rejoice in the generous Sir Robert, the honest, trusty Pompey, the gentle, beautiful Helen, and her brother and sister, and the good doctor, their intimate friend and almost daily visitor. And while we lie here as happy mementoes of that trying time, and, as they say, of the wonderful care and providence of God, it is not our least

pleasure to see so many of our sisters sent out to cheer the sorrowing, the needy and despairing, who, we well know, sisters, are to be found all over the land. Certainly, neither one of us desires to leave this happy home."

"No, no," replied the two others; and the second note added, "Particularly since I have heard anew of the hypocrisy of Ralph. Do you remember how he came lately and humbled himself before his rich uncle, promising repentance and amendment if he would but forgive him and take him into favor?"

"We shall never forget that, nor what answer Sir Robert made him. 'I can forgive you, Ralph,' he said, 'but as to favor, do not let us talk of that until you have shown by your life that your repentance is sincere. Ask forgiveness for all that you have done amiss, of One higher than I! Ask pardon of God, through Christ, for your ingratitude and cruelty to your benefactor and his children; for your heartless

conduct towards me, when you supposed me a poor, sickly old man—for all your evil words and ways. May His Spirit aid you to lead a better life! I give you here,' he added, 'the value of the note you bestowed on me. Look,' and he opened this casket, and showed him us notes, telling him with what design we were kept here. 'This one is in memory of the day when you turned me from your door; but Ralph, if by your life you show me that your repentance is sincere and lasting, I will blot out that memory, and the note shall pass away to further whatever charitable deed you may wish to perform.

“‘But if you should be in distress or want, Ralph, you may apply to me freely. I cannot forget that you are the son of my dear brother Edward; whatever your course may be, I will not see my brother's son in want. Go, and may the Lord give you a true heart, which is better than gold and silver.’

“He went, sisters, and I scarcely think he will ever return.”

“Or I,” said the first bank-note “But see, sisters, the night is almost over; the morning begins to dawn; it is time to rest. Good night!”

“Good night! good night!” whispered the other two little voices; the three tiny figures slipped from the golden arabesque over the rim of the casket; the crystal lid closed, and deep silence again reigned around. Only the clock kept up its incessant movement, measuring the passing moments with its steady tick! tick! tick!

Still the moon's steady rays shone through the high bay windows into the quiet room, but listening no more, for the little whispering beings were now silent, and slumbering sweetly like the happy human creatures whose wonderful story they had related to each other.

There is a *moral* to this little story, though
taught by only

Three Bank-Notes.





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